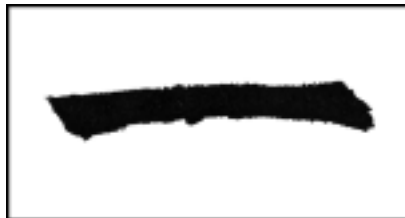


Final Report

Response Capabilities During Natural Disasters at USAID/OFDA and Applied Issues for JICA

March 30, 2001



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I Introduction

The general objective of this inquiry was to learn about practices within USAID/OFDA's organizational structure in order to suggest to JICA possible ways of improving its short-term response capabilities to natural disasters, especially in the Latin American region. In recent years, the vulnerability of all regions of the planet to natural disasters has impressed itself on the public mind through images of desolation reaching us instantaneously through the global communications network: earthquakes in Kobe, Turkey, India, and El Salvador; floods in Mozambique, Vietnam, and Venezuela; hurricanes and typhoons in Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean. The list is long.

Along with such awareness, concern has also grown within the donor community that the "hard-hat approach" to disaster management is insufficient to cope with the frequency and devastation of such disasters.¹ Immediate, short-term reactive measures are but one small part of the broader picture. This shifting perspective required the development of strategies and programs seen as increasingly necessary to minimize and mitigate the impact of these disasters, especially by breaking with the conditions and vicious cycles of vulnerability—e.g., poor environmental management and land use and construction codes—that magnify disasters. This report reflects that shift in perspective. Change, however, will not happen overnight, and will require a great deal of collaboration among many stakeholders.

This report is divided into six sections. After this introductory section, Section II outlines the research protocol, the sources of information and the limitations of the research. Perhaps the major limitation is that the comparison between OFDA and JICA suffers from some information gaps: proximity to OFDA's headquarters in Washington, D.C. favored a much richer analysis of that organization relative to JICA. Also, the availability and abundance of institutional material on USAID/OFDA's internal and external activities, and performance significantly outpaced that of JICA, especially in respect for disaster relief efforts in the Latin American region, among other matters.

Section III describes and compares OFDA and JICA, more specifically their mechanisms for activating and deploying disaster aid within the period immediately after disaster strikes. The comparison highlights two areas of contrast between OFDA and JICA. First, OFDA's operational units and teams command a higher degree of decentralized decision-making and flexibility relative to JICA's when responding to a natural disaster. A second area of contrast is in the use of networked responses in the various aspects or stages of disaster relief. OFDA relies upon a broader range of agents, relative to JICA, to meet its overall mandate.

Section IV draws from OFDA's evaluation of its performance in Central America during Hurricane Mitch in order to highlight lessons for other organizations, such as JICA, which are trying to improve their capabilities to respond to such disasters. The

¹ Interview with Caroline Clarke. IDB. Feb.2001.; IDB. (2000). *El desafío de desastres naturales en América Latina y el Caribe*. Washington, DC.; Lavell, Alan. (2000). "Riesgo urbano; una visión global." *La Era Urbana*. Otoño 2000/Vol.7,No.1.; OFDA. (1999). *Annual Report, FY 1999*. Washington, D.C.

Office of Program, Policy and Management of BHR (USAID) undertook a fairly comprehensive assessment of its role in humanitarian assistance in the region and produced a set of recommendations to improve future actions, particularly in two areas: (1) **Preparedness**; and (2) **Coordination and Communication Issues**.² Although JICA did carry out significant activities in the region after Hurricane Mitch, for diverse reasons it has been difficult to access such information.³

Section V goes deeper into OFDA's functioning, and selectively highlights some of the factors that contribute to that organization's flexibility and rapid response capabilities: (1) Logistics; (2) Procurement; (3) Technology; (4) Operational Readiness and Team Work; (5) Training in Latin America. Clearly these are not the only factors that contribute to OFDA's performance. OFDA works, so to speak, like a "learning organization"—constantly evaluating its experiences in order to improve its responses to all sorts of disasters. There is no such a thing as a "magic bullet" to improve response capability, only the accumulation and integration of experiences over time. This overall idea of constant learning and flexibility applies even to the organization of such functions as logistics and procurement, which are characteristically treated as strictly bureaucratic functions.

Section VI makes recommendations in three major categories: (1) those proceeding from comparisons of OFDA's and JICA's organizational characteristics; (2) those that emerge from OFDA's learning experience related to Hurricane Mitch, with applicability for JICA; and, (3) recommendations for JICA proceeding from the analysis of selective aspects of OFDA's internal functioning. Whenever possible and appropriate, we suggest concrete activities that could improve JICA's response capability.

II Research Protocol, Sources of Information, and Limitations of the Research

2.1 Research Protocol and Sources of Information

The general objective of this inquiry was to become acquainted with practices within USAID/OFDA's organizational structure in order to suggest to JICA possible ways of improving its short-term natural disaster response capabilities, especially in the Latin American region. At USAID, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) heads most of these programs. In accord with the original request by JICA, we intentionally disregarded in our research some of OFDA's organizational response capabilities to complex emergencies such as civil wars or other humanitarian crises.

Accordingly, we have relied on two major sources of information. First, we conducted a group of open-ended, in-depth interviews. These interviews were divided into three sub-groups. We interviewed OFDA personnel on the following topics:

² USAID,(2000). Hurricane Mitch: Management Assessment of Humanitarian Assistance Activities in Honduras and Nicaragua. USAID/BHR. Office of Program, Policy and Management. July 31, 2000.

³ Interview with Tetsuhiro Ueno, Assistant Resident Representative, JICA U.S.A. Office. Feb. 2001.

1. OFDA's inter- and intra-agency formal and informal coordination efforts in natural disaster relief;
2. OFDA's formal and informal coordination activities and efforts with various non-governmental institutions;
3. OFDA's experience in handling natural disasters in Latin America and, to some extent, in other regions;
4. Coordination lessons learned by OFDA as a result of Hurricane Mitch in Central America;
5. Aspects of OFDA's performance in natural disaster relief relating to its staffing and use of specialized personnel in social sciences, evaluation, logistics, management, training, and outreach;
6. Aspects of OFDA's procurement and logistics infrastructure that support its overall activities;
7. Particular efforts currently under development at OFDA to improve its future activities; and,
8. The evolving relationship between JICA and USAID/OFDA.

These in-depth interviews were supplemented by interviews with OFDA personnel away from its headquarters at USAID in Washington, D.C. and were carried on by electronic mail. The second sub-group of interviews included personnel from other organizations that have a significant stake in disaster relief efforts in the Latin American region, like the Inter-American Development Bank.

The objective of these interviews was to understand "networked responses" and priorities in regional disaster relief. Networked responses are designed to address strategically the need for improved organizational flexibility and coordination in relief efforts. Finally, we performed an in-depth interview with JICA's Washington, D.C. representative in charge of coordinating relief efforts.

The other major source of information was extensive review of institutional documentation on:

1. OFDA's activities and technical capabilities;
2. JICA's activities and technical capabilities;
3. Activities by the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Pan-American Health Organization, the World Bank, and the United Nations in specific facets of disaster relief and mitigation;
4. Virtual electronic networks such as VITA, ReliefWeb (a project of the UN's OCHA), and Sphere, which gather information about and coordinate disaster relief efforts.

To a lesser extent, we consulted additional academic literature on the vulnerability of the region to natural disasters; the impact of past disasters on the region; and the role disaster mitigation in development aid. All of these sources and the interviews are appropriately cited in the bibliographic section of this report.

2.2 *Limitations of this Research*

This research has four major limitations. First, the availability and abundance of institutional material on OFDA's internal and external activities and performance significantly was greater than the availability of corresponding JICA's materials, especially in regard for regional disaster relief efforts. In that regard, the comparison between OFDA and JICA suffers from some information asymmetry, especially in areas related to the organization's internal functioning and performance.

Second, proximity to OFDA's headquarters in Washington, D.C. favored a much richer analysis of that organization relative to JICA's.

Third, the resources allocated for this research did not allow for any field research outside Washington, D.C. Judging by other research reports commissioned by organizations such as OFDA, evaluations of disaster relief efforts typically command a much broader scope of activities by many agents, including field work and a much more systematic collection of data over a longer period of time.

Finally, in the "business" of disaster relief and mitigation, evaluation and learning involve an almost constant process of revision and modification, simply because every new disaster brings new challenges. Focusing on today's mechanisms of organizational flexibility, for instance, need not imply that these will continue to be effective mechanisms in the future, as well: it is necessary to retrace these steps periodically, to identify and evaluate both weaknesses and new sources of strength.

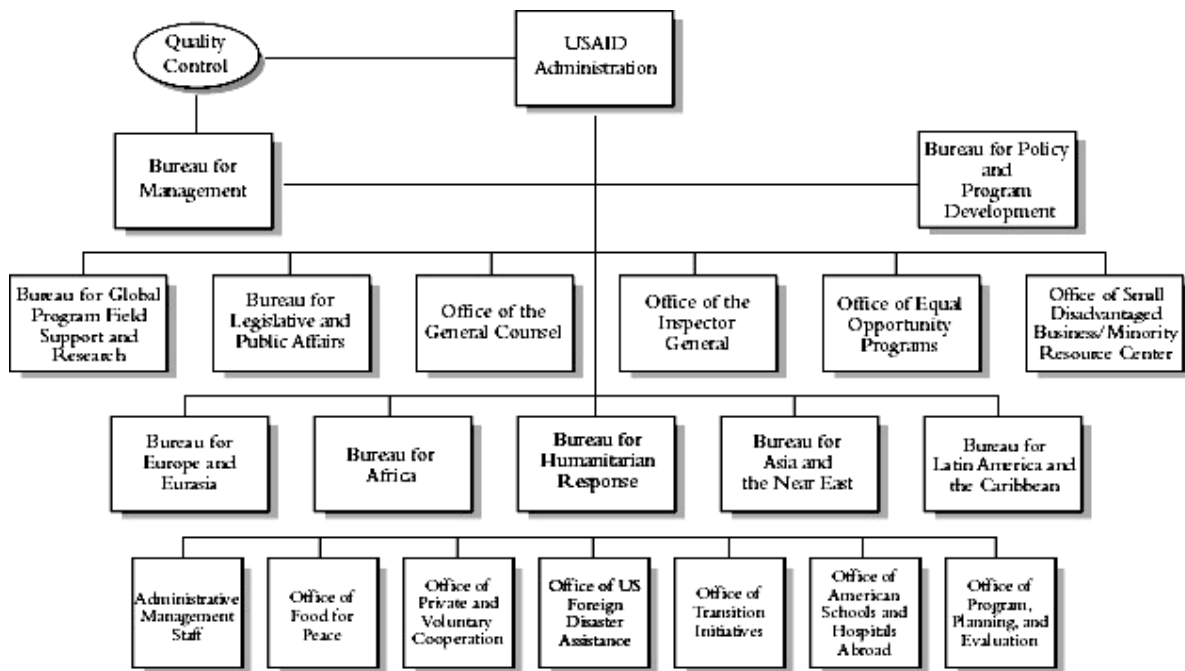
III OFDA and JICA Compared

3.1 *OFDA's Organizational Structure*

The US. Agency for International Development, USAID, is an autonomous agency under the policy direction of the Department of State, which administers and directs the U.S. foreign assistance program and acts as the lead federal agency of U.S. foreign disaster assistance. The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, OFDA, is the office within USAID that is responsible for providing humanitarian assistance in response to disasters, natural as well as man-made, in foreign countries.⁴

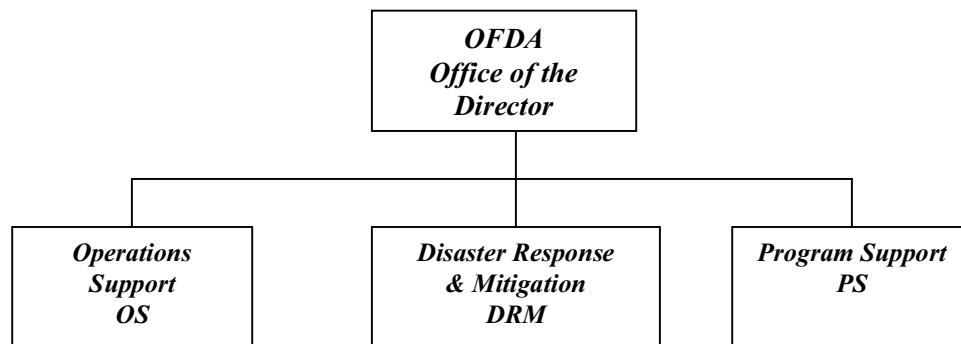
⁴ Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961 as amended.

USAID Organizational Structure



Source: OFDA Annual Report FY 1999:7.

OFDA is part of the Bureau for Humanitarian Response (USAID/BHR) along with the Office of Food for Peace (BHR/FFP), the Office of Transition Initiatives (BHR/OTI), the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (BHR/PVC) and the Office of American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (BHR/ASHA).⁵



- The Disaster Response & Mitigation Division (DRM) is responsible for managing aid given in response to overseas disasters and crises.

⁵ OFDA's description is based on Caribbean Mission Disaster Preparedness Reference Guide. OFDA, BHR/USAID, Jamaica, 1999:1-10 and OFDA-LAC web page <http://www.ofdalac.org> and Report FY 1999.

- The Operations Support Division (OS) provides the necessary technical and logistical support to the Office and the programs and personnel it oversees,
- The Program Support (PS) Division administers OFDA's accounting systems, which allow for rapid disbursement of funds for swift disaster response.

ODFA maintains regional offices in San José, Costa Rica, and Nairobi, Kenya, and Manila, Philippines, and subdivision offices in Jamaica, Nepal, and Indonesia. The San José regional office is responsible for activities in Latin America and the Caribbean and serves as a station for the Regional Disaster Advisory Team. OFDA also has regional advisors for the three Latin American regions (South America, Central America and Mexico, and the Caribbean).

OFDA accounts also for USAID's network of field offices and trained disaster response personnel, usually through the U.S. mission in a certain country. As of 1999, USAID had offices or development activities in 17 Latin American countries.

3.2 *OFDA's Mandate*

OFDA has the responsibility to provide foreign disaster assistance and to coordinate⁶ the U.S. Government's (USG) response to disasters abroad. This mandate includes:

- **Disaster relief** to address immediate life-threatening concerns with rapid, appropriate response to requests for assistance;
- **Disaster Rehabilitation and Reconstruction** in order to assist the community to recover and reduce its vulnerability to future disasters;
- **Prevention, Mitigation, and Preparedness** to help implement measures to reduce risks posed by natural and man-made hazards to vulnerable people and assets.

OFDA's mandate is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the economic impact of disasters. Disaster relief is OFDA's primary mandate. Rehabilitation and reconstruction are secondary priorities and are assumed by OFDA when relief fails to meet the affected community's need to return to a state of viability and resume productive development⁷.

Prevention, mitigation, and preparedness, singled out as crucial factors for reducing disaster-prone countries' vulnerability, are generally implemented through standard agency policies.

⁶ Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies (September 15, 1993); Designation of the USAID Administrator as the Special Coordinator for the International Disaster Assistance (Series 200 Program Assistance. 251-International Disaster Assistance)

⁷ International Disaster Assistance (Series 200 Program Assistance. 251-International Disaster Assistance)

By the end of the 1990's, however, myriad man-made (complex) disasters as well as an unprecedented number of natural disasters exposed the deep and long-lasting effects of such events on development and tested the effectiveness of relief efforts. This realization reshaped the former BHR/OFDA approach to disaster relief, which focused almost exclusively on immediate and short-term response capabilities and provision of basic necessities to affected populations:

- (1) The Office reinforced its role in prevention, preparedness, and mitigation by expanding its in-house expertise, and increased its response capability by providing scientific, technical, and analytical knowledge to activities and decision-making.⁸
- (2) A new focus was placed on strengthening the integration of relief and development efforts. BHR/OFDA revised its guidelines for grant proposals to reflect this new commitment to strategies that safeguard livelihood and otherwise maintain economic viability during complex emergencies. In addition, the Office placed renewed emphasis on context-specific programming and adopted in 1998 new guidelines for grant proposals and evaluation that incorporated variables such as gender, the environment, and existing political networks into the analysis and into the strategies for dealing with particular disasters.⁹ The enhanced link between relief and development expanded the Office's donor role to include financing of activities that formerly might have fallen into the "development" category.

The new approach, however, did not necessarily blur the lines between development and disaster relief: "We don't try to make our disaster assistance grants into development grants - we do try to look for opportunities to change behaviors that contributed to the vulnerability to the disaster/crises in the first place and we look for measures that mitigate against dependency and that do not hinder future development."¹⁰

- (3) This new approach also increased the need for coordination. An OFDA officer explained: "before Mitch, the San José Office rarely funded NGOs in disaster response. During Mitch, because of the sheer magnitude of the disaster, the number of agents working in the field increased dramatically, and coordination was lacking. A stronger link between response, mitigation and preparedness started to penetrate in OFDA's consciousness, as well as the advantages of strengthening the relations with NGOs on a regular basis. When a disaster strikes, we can move more quickly based on their knowledge of the field and preparedness"¹¹. This increased coordination was addressed by:
 - Appointing a PVO/IO donor coordinator to work on a permanent basis with volunteer networks such as VITA and Inter Action and manage

⁸ OFDA Annual Report FY 1999

⁹OFDA Annual Report, op. cit.; Interviews with Marion Pratt and Eileen Simoes, OFDA. Feb.2001.

¹⁰ Interview with Anita Menghetti, OFDA. March 2001.

¹¹ Interview with Eileen Simoes, OFDA. Feb. 2001.

grants that serve primarily to increase the capacity of the NGO community, for example, in the areas of evaluation and IEC.

- Strengthening relations with other donors such as IDB, the World Bank and PAHO, and with hemispheric networks such as OAS, PAHO, Inter-American Dialogue, and CAMI.
 - Coordination of disaster response with the U.S. military (Department of Defense [DOD]) was strengthened by stationing an OFDA-Military Liaison in Miami where U.S. Southern Command (“SouthCom”) responsible for the entire Latin American and Caribbean Region is headquartered, and an OFDA military operations person in San José, Costa Rica, to work in the field with SouthCom field counterparts in the region.
 - Updating and reinforcing the pool of consultants and the databases of trained personnel on the ground in Latin America, through a regional support contract with the International Resources Group (IRG).
- (4) The growing complexity of disasters also required that OFDA increase its operational presence. In response to this demand, the Office established in 1999 a Washington-based Response Management Team (RMT) to coordinate and support Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) activities in the field.¹²

3.3 *Networks: The Core of OFDA’s Resources*

OFDA carries out its responsibilities in conjunction with the government of the affected country, other donor governments, international organizations, UN relief agencies, and private voluntary and non-governmental organizations. This requires extensive coordination between OFDA and other USAID agencies, between OFDA and other USG agencies, and with an extensive network of agencies ranging from international organizations of global scope to locally based NGOs.

Within BHR, OFDA works closely with Food for Peace (FFP) to provide emergency food aid programs, and with the Office of Transition Initiatives to provide assistance to countries in transition from crisis to recovery. Other USAID bodies, such as the regional bureaus, provide foreign development aid that usually complements humanitarian relief programs.

A great many of the resources that OFDA mobilizes come from its working partnerships with other federal agencies whose mandates and resources enhance disaster operations, among them FFP, State/PRM, and DOD. OFDA works with FFP to allocate surplus food commodities provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to disaster-related emergency feeding programs. OFDA also has a close relationship with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (State/PRM), which provides multilateral grants to international relief organizations in

¹² Both RMT’s and DART’s are discussed farther along in the report.

response to refugee emergency appeals and contributes to regular programs of organizations such as the UN's High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)¹³. OFDA works with the Department of Defense (DOD) on matters concerning defense equipment and personnel and to arrange transportation¹⁴, and with DOD's Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs (PK/HA) to coordinate use of DOD assets for overseas humanitarian assistance and the Denton Program¹⁵.

Federal cooperation also enhances OFDA's technical resources. Sources OFDA cooperates with include the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for notification and assessment of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for typhoon, hurricane, and cyclone reporting assessments. OFDA also relies on the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for expert and technical assistance.

OFDA usually relies on extensive networks of Private Volunteer Organizations (PVOs), International Organizations (IOs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to implement disaster relief. PVOs and NGOs are OFDA's primary operating partners, with a presence in affected countries and experience with disasters, emergency food assistance, and transition initiatives. Among the PVOs and NGOs with which OFDA maintains regular relationships are Save the Children, World Relief, Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), World Vision, CARE International, Action contre La Faim, the American Council for Voluntary International Action (InterAction), Red Cross National Societies, Carit  s and Oxfam. OFDA also works with International Organizations (IOs) such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Partners of the Americas, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Committee of the Red Cross, and United Nations agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP), United Nations International Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF), and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

OFDA collaborates with these agencies to develop and coordinate their various prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response activities. Operating within these networks, and depending on the nature of the disaster or the phase of the intervention, OFDA can act as a donor funding certain programs or activities), support source for certain activities—e.g., providing technical advise; or as a partner, coordinating its own fieldwork with international agencies.

In the Latin American region, OFDA maintains close contact with a series of regional networks with extensive knowledge of disaster relief and development activities.

¹³ This is a partial list of OFDA's partners for illustrative purposes only. A complete list is available from Mr. Ron Gilmer at OFDA.

¹⁴ OFDA pays for the services—typically airlift—and/or commodities requested from DOD.

¹⁵ The Denton Program is a program that facilitates US. military transportation of humanitarian goods on a space-available basis.

These activities are normally part of the Office's mitigation/preparedness activities. OFDA regional partnerships include organizations such as:

Organization of American States (OAS). OAS, through its Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment (USDE), supports OAS member states in natural hazard management through policy and strategic action preparation, technical assistance, training, and technology transfer. The activities are coordinated with international development assistance agencies, including the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), U.N. Development Program (UNDP), U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), World Bank, and bilateral development assistance agencies. Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project (CDMP)¹⁶ From 1993 to 1999, OAS and USAID/OFDA implemented an agreement by which the OAS executed the Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project (CDMP). The objective of the CDMP was to establish sustainable public/private sector mechanisms for disaster mitigation that measurably lessen the loss of life, reduce physical and economic damage, and shorten the disaster recovery period. The project addressed some of the major issues in the disaster-development linkage in the Caribbean, such as the need to reduce natural hazard vulnerability in existing and planned development; mapping of hazard-prone and environmentally fragile areas; use of mapping information in public awareness and development decision-making; and capacity of the insurance industry to better manage risk and maintain adequate catastrophe protection for the region. The CDMC had activities throughout all the Caribbean region, with pilot activities in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominican Republic, Dominica, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Grenada.¹⁷ OFDA/USAID also collaborates regularly with OAS in training and workshops for disaster mitigation and preparedness.

- **Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)** has a Health Sector Disaster Program, that stresses preparedness, mitigation, and disaster response. When disaster strikes, PAHO works with the affected country to identify and assess needs and damages in the health sector, including water and sanitation systems; set up an epidemiological surveillance system; monitor drinking water quality; mobilize aid from the international donor community; and manage donated relief supplies. PAHO has established a fund to support post-disaster emergency needs and activities, and collaborate with many organizations and sectors—civil defense, universities, NGOs, parliaments, donors, and the media, among others.

¹⁶ Catalogue of Projects Completed and in Execution Related to Natural Hazards Management. Natural Hazards Project, OAS/USDE, Washington, DC, June 2000. Consult this publication for a catalogue of the diverse projects and initiatives carried by USDE/OAS from 1983-2000.

¹⁷ Detailed information on each of the project's activities is available on the project web site at <http://www.oas.org/en/cdmp>

To supplement its networks of experts and training, PAHO created in 1990 a health procurement system, The Humanitarian Supply Management System¹⁸ (“SUMA”) and an Information Network, (“CRID.”) SUMA has helped to direct the logistics of humanitarian supply management, making the process more transparent and accountable. SUMA allows authorities and donors to manage donations, identifying and assigning priority to those supplies urgently needed and providing tools for inventory control on warehousing and distribution of supplies. The Regional Disaster Information Center (CRID)¹⁹ is now a multi-agency center supported by six organizations. Its principal objective is to collect, classify, and distribute technical and scientific documentation on all aspects of disaster reduction. CRID is the premiere source of information produced by and for Latin America and the Caribbean.

OFDA relies strongly on PAHO for expertise in assessing and attending to health/water sanitation needs immediately following disasters. In the field, OFDA regularly lends support to PAHO’s teams, and DART works alongside them to coordinate and provide support for their activities. OFDA funded a portion of PAHO’s activities related to Hurricane Mitch and Venezuela’s disastrous floods.²⁰

- **Central America Mitigation Initiative (CAMI).** OFDA is funding this 3-year, US\$11 million initiative to increase coordination and preparedness in the Central American Region. CAMI finances activities at the regional, national, municipal, and community levels to forecast, monitor, prevent, and respond to disasters. CAMI involves different technical USG agencies, as well as PVOs and IOs such as the American Red Cross, CARE, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, PAHO, and universities, authorities and organizations at different state levels, and NGO community groups in several countries of Central America.

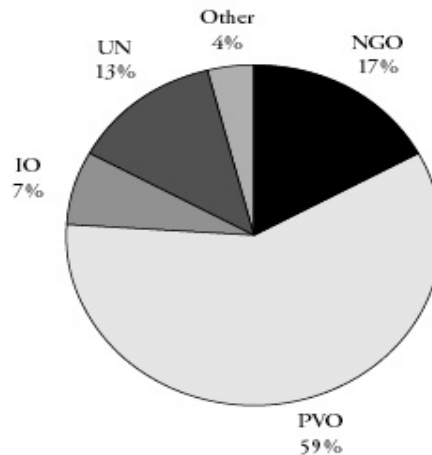
OFDA’s emphasis on “networked responses” to disaster relief, mitigation, and prevention is reflected in its budget allocation decisions: the largest percentage of OFDA’s assistance goes to relief and rehabilitation project grants managed by these organizations.

¹⁸ For details regarding PAHO’s procurement, see www.disaster.info.desastres.net/SUMA. The system includes SUMA teams that work at warehouses and distribution points, plus special software for managing, classifying and controlling supplies, and country training.

¹⁹ See www.disaster.info.desastres.net/CRID

²⁰ Interview with Eileen Simoes, OFDA. Feb. 2001.

OFDA's Funding of Grants by Agency Type, FY 1999



Note: Figures are estimates.

OFDA Annual Report FY 1999:8.

Cooperation and coordination with disaster aid networks is an essential part of OFDA's strategy for providing disaster relief assistance. These networks: (a) expand OFDA's response capabilities and areas of expertise; (b) enhance the timeliness of the response; (c) enhance the adequacy of the response because of their specific knowledge; and (d) promote a better use of available resources.

Collaboration with the various agents mentioned above has organizational implications for OFDA, for they demand greater internal cohesiveness. Typical functions, such as logistics and procurement, are not performed in isolation from the greater, and even more important, mandate of reaching the needy. Good logistics or efficient procurement would not make any difference in disaster readiness and responsiveness if they were not integrated within a broader organizational context that values such collaboration and flexibility.

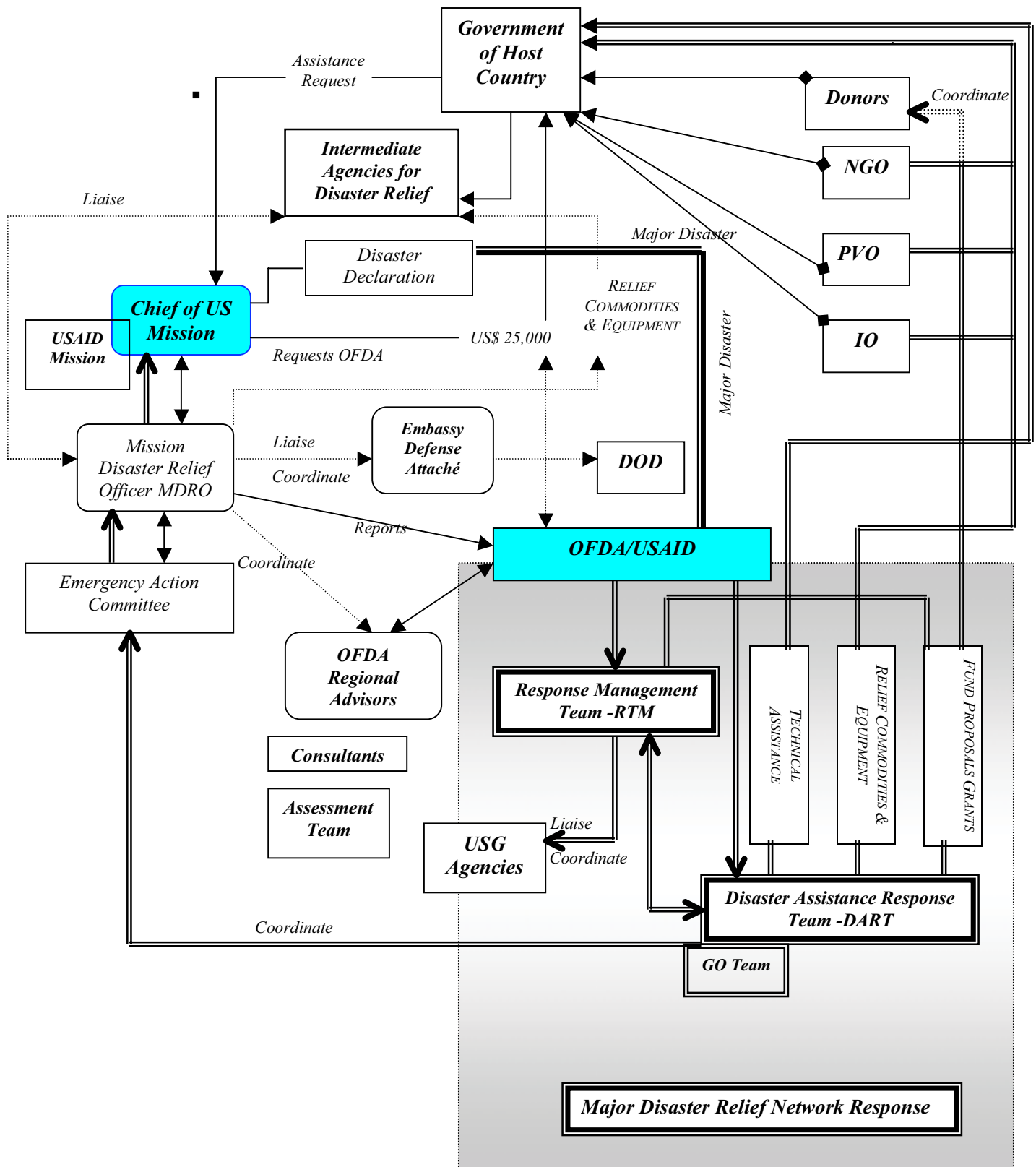
3.4 When Disaster Strikes

The primary responsibility for disaster relief rests with the government of the affected country. The U.S. Chief of Mission, ("CM" generally the Ambassador) is the principal liaison between the USG and the affected country's authorities. OFDA responds when the CM in an affected country has declared a disaster. The CM appoints a Mission Disaster Relief Officer (MDRO) approves a Mission Disaster Relief Plan, makes use of a \$25,000 Disaster Assistance Authority, and determines whether to make a disaster declaration and request further USG involvement. This would be the case if the magnitude of the disaster exceeds the affected country's capacity to respond, and the host-country government requests U.S. assistance. When the Ambassador has made the disaster declaration, USAID/OFDA coordinates the USG response. The OFDA's responsibilities include:

- Organize and coordinate the total USG disaster relief response;
 - Respond to embassy and/or mission requests for disaster assistance;
 - Initiate necessary procurement of supplies, services, and transportation;
 - Coordinate assistance efforts with operational-level NGOs and PVOs.²¹
- OFDA may provide, depending on the nature and scope of the disaster;
- \$25,000 for immediate assistance to disaster victims, requested by CM;
 - Technical assistance for damage and needs assessments through OFDA Assessment Team; regional advisors and/or consultants;
 - Disaster relief commodities and equipment from one of OFDA's warehouses (see details in section 5.1);
 - Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) field operation in response to large-scale disasters;
 - Fund proposals by NGOs, PVOs, IOs or U.S. agencies.

²¹ Interagency Coordination During Joint Operations. DOD. Joint publication 3-08, 1996.

Diagram: OFDA's First Response to a Disaster



OFDA's mandate provides considerable flexibility in the ways in which it may respond to disasters. Its response to emergency relief needs is on a demand-driven basis. When needed, OFDA can perform a wide range of activities, including support for PVO or NGO food monitoring and surveillance, donor coordination units, emergency personnel in international organizations, and search and rescue teams.²²

3.5 *USAID's Organizational Values*

USAID's organizational structure is designed to reflect and directly support the Agency's five core values — managing for results, customer focus, teamwork and participation, empowerment and accountability, and valuing diversity. In accordance with agency policy, the following principles of organization management apply:

- a. *Results Focus:* Enable USAID staff to manage in order to achieve identified results in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Managers should ensure that functions are clearly and completely defined.
- b. *Responsibility and Authority:* Responsibility should be assigned to the lowest organization level at which it can be effectively discharged, and authority must be delegated consistent with assigned responsibility. Lines of authority and assignments of responsibility are to be clearly delineated.
- c. To improve the ability of the Agency to address development challenges in a more collaborative and cost-effective manner, managers are encouraged to use matrix management techniques to obtain the personnel resources and expertise from USAID bureaus, offices, and missions as needed for specific projects.

3.6 *Authority*

OFDA's operational flexibility is evident in the ways in which authority is allocated according to the needs arising from the emergency situation. The chain of command can be characterized as hierarchical, but vested with autonomous decision-making. The Director of USAID delegates operational responsibility for disaster relief to OFDA's Director. OFDA's Director can activate a Response Management Team (RMT)²³ in response to a major disaster, and defines the RMT composition and mission. The Response Manager receives a written delegation of authority from the Director of OFDA, detailing constraints and level of commitment. Once the RMT is activated, response decisions rest with the Response Manager. Also in response to major disasters, OFDA can activate a DART²⁴ to coordinate assessment of the situation, manage onsite relief activities, and manage USG-provided relief supplies. OFDA's Director approves a DART, but the DART's Team Leader bears organizational and supervisory responsibility for the DART or the State Department. The team leader works directly with the Assistant

²² Functional Series 200. USAID Program Assistance, Interim update #6, April 12, 1999.

²³ Washington Response Management Team Policy. Internal document. OFDA, December 10, 1999.

²⁴ Field Operations Guide, FOG, Version 3.

Director of OFDA's Disaster Response Division. A more detailed description of both the RMT and the DART is provided later in this report.

At these different operational levels, activated to respond to a major disaster, authority is delegated appropriately to maximize speed and effectiveness. This is clear, for example, in decisions regarding funds allocation for assessed needs. OFDA's Director is allotted funding for the activities of the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account.²⁵ The Director can re-delegate responsibility for the fiscal management of OFDA's field operations when deemed appropriate in order to expedite IDA-support activities. The USAID Mission Director or the U.S. Ambassador in the affected country may be delegated authority and responsibility for specified activities. OFDA Regional Disaster Advisors are delegated broad management responsibility for programs in the field, including disbursement of IDA funds. The Team Leader of the DART may be so designated when such delegation will serve to reduce the threat to the lives of disaster victims.²⁶

In the event of life-threatening relief needs, funds from the IDA account may be obligated: (1) through the established procedures in the USAID's Acquisition and Assistance; (2) by a U.S. overseas mission, when funds are allocated by OFDA for in-country procurement of goods and services via grant agreements with local or national governments, PVOs, NGOs and IOs, or contracts with commercial entities; (3) by designated U.S. officials in the field to whom specific authority has been delegated for this purpose; and (4) via cabled advice of tasking to DOD.²⁷

OFDA's general effectiveness greatly depends on the significant degree of autonomy vested in its operational personnel and managers.

3.7 International Disaster Relief System of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA

The Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA, is a special government corporation founded in 1974 with the purpose of contributing to economic and social development and to promote international cooperation. JICA carries out a variety of programs aimed at the transfer of technology and knowledge that can foster the development of less-developed countries. JICA has about 1,200 staff members working in Japan and more than 50 overseas offices. JICA's programs include technical cooperation, the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), grants and aid programs, investment and financing, support for Japanese emigrants, and disaster relief.

²⁵ Authorized under Sections 491 and 492 of the FAA.

²⁶ International Disaster Assistance (Series 200 Program Assistance. 251-International Disaster Assistance)

²⁷ Ibid.

Within JICA, the Secretariat of Japan Disaster Relief Team (JDR)²⁸, is responsible for carrying out disaster relief operations overseas.²⁹ In 1998, JDR Secretariat was restructured to include the Disaster Assistance Division (DAD) and the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Division (HACD) under JDR's Managing Director. DAD responsibilities include planning and coordination of disaster assistance; maintenance of equipment and supplies for disaster relief stored in 5 warehouses (Narita, Japan, Singapore, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States)³⁰ and their delivery in response to a disaster; dispatching JDR teams; and training.

The purpose of the disaster relief program is to provide emergency relief when a major disaster occurs overseas, especially in developing countries. Japan extends three types of emergency assistance on request from disaster-affected countries or international organizations: (1) dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief Teams (JDR); (2) donation of emergency supplies; and (3) emergency grants.

JDR teams are rescue, medical, or expert teams. The decision to dispatch one or more types of teams depends on the nature and needs arising from the particular disaster. The main tasks of a rescue team are search and rescue, medical aid, and moving people to safety. A rescue team must be prepared to leave Japan within 12 hours after a request for assistance has been issued. Each rescue team consists of personnel from the National Police Agency, the Japan Coast Guard, and the Fire Defense Agency, along with logistics.

Medical teams consist of doctors, nurses, and medical and logistics coordinators. The main task of a medical team is to provide medical treatment, in either a central or supportive role, to the victims of disasters. Medical teams may be required to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Once a request has been received, a team is expected to be able to leave Japan within 48 hours.

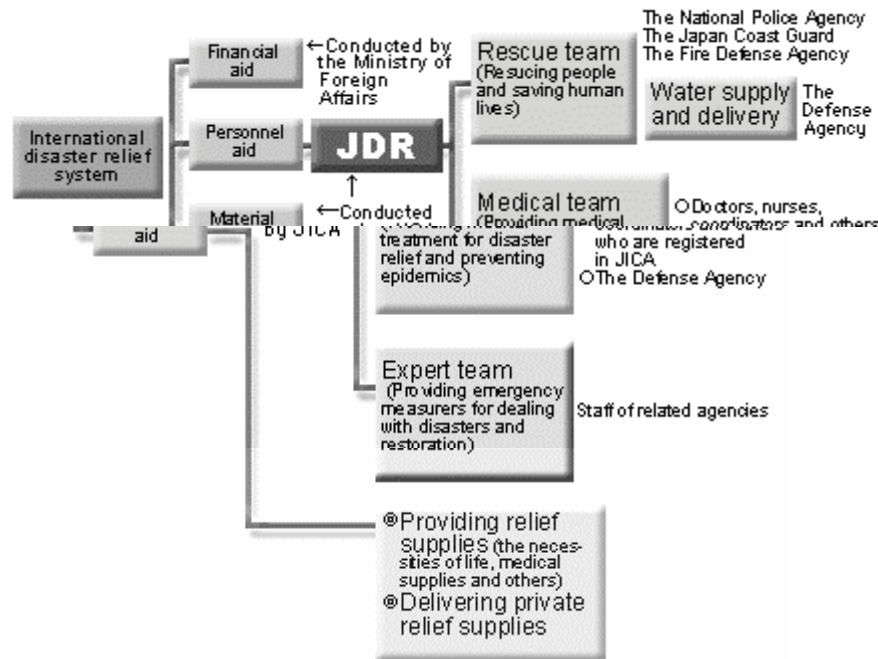
Expert teams advise and implement various measures in the wake of disasters. Teams are made up of experts recommended by related government ministries and agencies according to the type of disaster. In 1999, Japan dispatched 11 teams in response to several requests for aid. Of these, 3 were rescue teams, with 289 people; 5 medical—with 78 health personnel; and 3 emergency relief and recovery advisory teams, which comprised 25 experts.

²⁸ International Disaster Relief System. Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA, n/d. and JICA's website : [Http://jica.go.jp/english](http://jica.go.jp/english)

²⁹ In September 1987, the provision of disaster relief was properly systematized with the promulgation and enactment of the Japan Disaster Relief Team Law (also known as the JDR Law), which provided for practical relief. This law was partially amended in June 1992, making it possible for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, after consultation with the Director General of the Defense Agency, to send teams from the Japanese Self-Defense Forces in two situations, namely (1) when a disaster on a large scale occurs and extensive aid is required, and (2) when there is a need for self-reliant activities in the disaster area. These changes in the law have resulted in the formation of a more comprehensive implementation system as regards the dispatch of JDR teams. International Disaster Relief System. Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA, n/d

³⁰ In emergencies, medical supplies not suited to permanent storage are obtained from UNICEF in Copenhagen.

Japan's International Disaster Relief System



Source: Disaster Schemes. JICA website

JDR also supplies aid materials from JICA's warehouses for relief purposes such as blankets, tents, water purifiers, and water containers. JICA also coordinates and delivers voluntary donations made by Japanese citizens to the affected country.

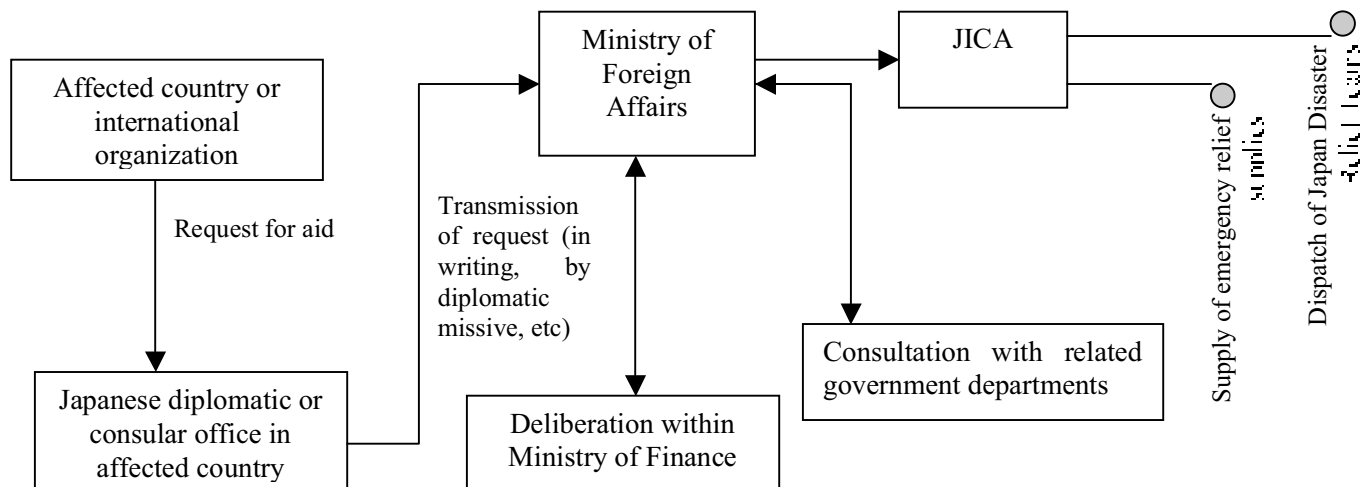
3.8 When Disaster Strikes

The Japan Disaster Relief System has two separate bodies for delivering aid. JICA is in charge of delivering material aid and the teams of experts, while the responsibility for financial aid (grants or emergency funds) rests with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

As shown in the following chart, the decisions as to whether to provide disaster aid in response to a request from an affected country lies primarily within the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, starting with the request of the Japanese Ambassador to MOFA. Then, MOFA, in consultation with MOF, allocates funds for the relief operations. JICA acts as a subordinate executive agency in charge of implementing the

actual relief operation by dispatching JDR teams and procuring the materials assigned for each aid operation.³¹

Mechanisms for implementation of emergency disaster aid (excluding capital assistance)³²



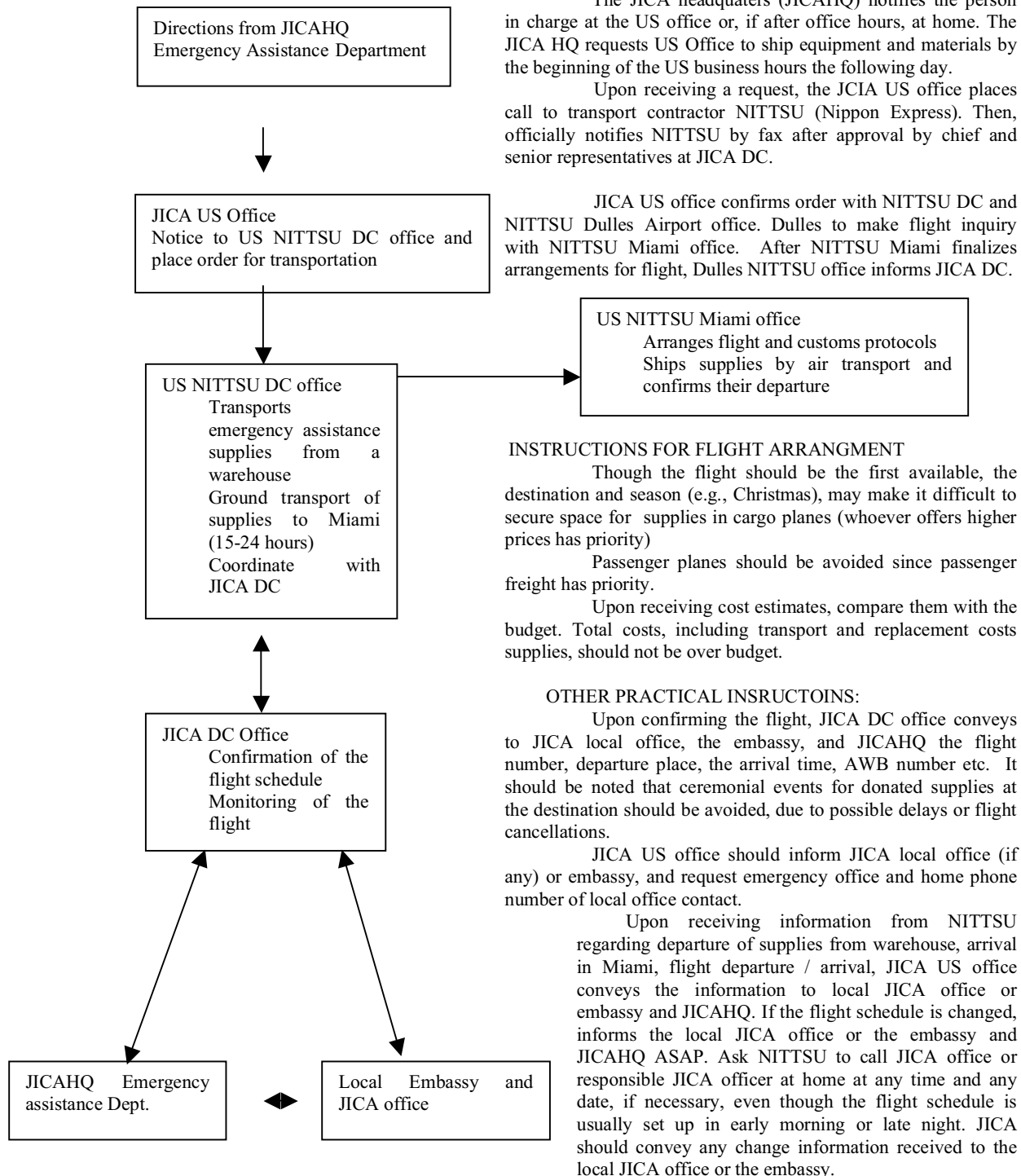
JICA does not have the functional authority to determine the scope and nature of the relief intervention. Such decisions seem to result from a process involving the initial country request; the assessment of the Japanese Ambassador and his/her request; and further processing by MOFA and the Ministry of Finance according to standard bureaucratic procedures that stipulate the type and amount of aid according to a classification of the type and severity of the disaster³³.

³¹ Interview with Tetsuhiro Ueno, Assistant Resident Representative JICA U.S.A. Office. Feb.2001.

³² Chart taken from Annual Report 1999, JICA, 1999:150

³³ Interview with Tetsuhiro Ueno, Assistant Resident Representative JICA U.S.A. Office. Feb.2001.

Institutional Arrangement for Emergency Assistance in the Americas: Shipping Equipment and Materials ³⁴ in JICA US Office



³⁴ JICA's internal memorandum, n/d.

3.9 *Network Response*

Japan's system for disaster relief appears to be giving increased importance to the type of "network response" that has become one of OFDA's trademarks. In 1999, Japan supplied 16 emergency grant packages for natural disasters, totaling around 1.01 billion yen. Among these were grants to Japanese NGOs engaged in emergency humanitarian relief activities in response to the earthquakes in Turkey and Taiwan.³⁵ In response to the recent crisis in El Salvador, the Government of Japan decided to extend emergency grant aid totaling approximately 264 million yen to El Salvador. This emergency aid comprised funding for about 2.13 million dollars (about 224 million yen) for the Government of El Salvador, and about 40 million yen for a Japanese NGO (Japanese Red Cross Society), which is engaged in assisting the victims in El Salvador.³⁶

In spite of a growing interest expressed by JICA in establishing closer working relations with NGOs and PVOs, JICA's disaster relief operations today only rarely involve coordination with NGOs or PVOs in the field.³⁷ This may be due in part to the fact that, unlike USAID/OFDA funding, emergency relief funds are disbursed and decided by a separate line of authority such as JICA MOFA and MOF, without consultations with NGOs. Another factor may be the relatively weaker capacity of Japanese NGOs to respond to disaster relief.

To address this issue, a coalition of NGOs, MOFA, and Japan Federation of Economic Organizations (Keidanren) announced a program, named as the "Japan Platform" in 2000. This program was designed to enhance the capacity of Japanese NGOs to respond to conflicts or natural disasters. This plan supports NGOs' immediate response activities. The plan, which has been under discussion by the NGOs since the beginning of 2000, attempts to increase and strengthen the capacity of Japanese NGOs to establish their emergency response systems, including initial assessments, first response in affected areas, distribution of emergency supplies and equipment). While the Japan programs is based on a NGO coalition, the Japanese governments, private enterprises, media, and academic institutions also will participate in the program.

The "Platform" program will facilitate the pooling of resources to allow NGOs to increase their response capabilities, for example, financing provided by foundations, and equipment donated by private enterprises. Any NGO that fulfils the criteria of accountability, transparency, and organization can participate in this Japan Platform program. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs will provide the program with financial resources to be used for training, human resources development, and the production of the databases including information on conflicts and natural disasters available to the NGOs participating in the Platform program.

³⁵ Sectoral Analysis of the International Situation and Japan's Foreign Policy. International emergency assistance for natural disasters. MOFA—2000 Diplomatic Bluebook

³⁶ Press release MOFA, February 20, 2001.

³⁷ Interview with Tetsuhiro Ueno, Assistant Resident Representative JICA U.S.A. Office. Feb.2001.

3.10 Apparent Contrast Between OFDA and JICA Relevant to Rapid Response

Two areas of contrast between OFDA and JICA can be highlighted for their relevance in understanding the two organizations' capabilities for natural disaster response

First, there is the relatively higher degree of decentralized decision-making and flexibility held by OFDA's operational units and teams relative to JICA's in responding to a natural disaster. It is the result of several factors:

- (1) USAID/OFDA's lesser dependence on the fiscal –decision-making authority of a fiscal conduit;
- (2) Greater operational independence of USAID/OFDA within the structure of the U.S. Department of State;
- (3) Administrative attributes and principles within OFDA organizational structure that give executive officers and personnel greater decision-making authority;
- (4) Use of multi-task, multi-functional teams that internalize decision-making in the many aspects of disaster relief.

The second area of contrast is in the use of networked responses in the various aspects or stages of disaster relief. OFDA, relative to JICA, apparently relies upon a broader range of agents to meet their overall mandate. Among these agents are private, public, and non-profit organizations in the U.S., internationally, and within the host countries. Undoubtedly, the formation and use of these networks has required the making and managing of important adaptations. Section V of this report outlines some of them.

In conclusion, JICA appears to function organizationally with greater centralization and less operational flexibility than OFDA, and relies much less on networked responses for disaster relief. Because these are structural and operational distinctions, it is not likely that strategic procedural changes will be made quickly or in particular, tactical areas such as logistics or procurement. Moreover, the external structural constraints imposed on JICA's operational procedures, particularly with regard to funding locations etc. are somewhat distinct from those faced by USAID/OFDA, appearing to favor to appearing to favor the latter organization with a greater scope for autonomous decision-making.

IV Hurricane Mitch: An Eye Opener

According to a report by USAID, “Hurricane Mitch was the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Central America.”³⁸ Other reports and documentation by IDB and PAHO only reaffirm that statement.³⁹ Two of the poorest countries in Latin America were hit the hardest: Honduras and Nicaragua. Hurricane Mitch, labeled the “storm of the century,” caused about 10,000 deaths, displaced and left homeless hundreds of thousands, and caused estimated damages totaling about \$US 3.0 billion in Honduras and \$1.4 billion in Nicaragua. The shock to the economies of these countries and the region will be felt for many years to come since the structural damage will reduce GDP growth rates significantly and probably exacerbate already existing deficiencies—high poverty rates, housing deficits, poor infrastructure, and weak health systems. In light of such conditions, the U.S. Congress and the international aid community have committed significant resources to help reconstruct the region and reduce its vulnerability to such disasters.⁴⁰

Why did Hurricane Mitch, and its dramatic exposure of the region’s vulnerability to natural disasters, have such an organizational impact on the humanitarian and international aid community? Most reports on Hurricane Mitch agree that its power rapidly overwhelmed the capacity of the region to cope with natural disasters. Mitch was simply too big and powerful. The reports also appreciate that the efforts and good response of many agents and institutions, such as the BHR, OFDA, and other humanitarian relief agencies, prevented further pain and deterioration in the aftermath; however, some important lessons could be drawn from the experience of managing such large natural disasters.

The Office of Program, Policy and Management of BHR (USAID) conducted a fairly comprehensive assessment of its role in humanitarian assistance in the region and has produced a set of recommendations to improve future actions, especially in two areas: (1) **Preparedness** and (2) **Coordination and Communication Issues**.⁴¹

These recommendations are largely defined by the specific context created by Mitch, and they are mainly concerned with improving the response capabilities of U.S. Government agencies; counterparts in host countries; and the network of PVOs and NGOs that participate with USAID in relief efforts. Nevertheless, the recommendations provide a sound framework for other agencies such as JICA to improve their response capabilities in similar disasters. Below, we identify some of the specific recommendations contained in the Report for OFDA. Immediately following each

³⁸ USAID,(2000). Hurricane Mitch: Management Assessment of Humanitarian Assistance Activities in Honduras and Nicaragua. USAID/BHR. Office of Program, Policy and Management. July 31, 2000. P.5

³⁹ BID, (2000). El desafío de los desastres naturales en América Latina y el Caribe: Plan de Acción del BID. Washington DC.; PAHO, (1999). Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster Situations: A Guide for Effective Aid. Pan-American Health Organization. Washington, D.C.

⁴⁰ Most recently, El Salvador, spared somewhat by Hurricane Mitch relative to Honduras and Nicaragua, was struck by consecutive earthquakes in the span of a month.

⁴¹ USAID,(2000). Hurricane Mitch: Management Assessment of Humanitarian Assistance Activities in Honduras and Nicaragua. USAID/BHR. Office of Program, Policy and Management. July 31, 2000.

specific recommendation, we draw a more generic or implied recommendation that may have applicable value for JICA. Further in Section VI of this report, we translate these more generic or implied recommendations into actual activities that JICA could possibly organize in order to modify, as it deems fit, some of its programs.

4.1 Preparedness Recommendations

In the area of **Preparedness**, the recommendations can be synthesized into eight points:

- 2) **Specific Recommendation.** The USAID Missions in host countries recommended to BHR that OFDA could provide ongoing training to mission staff on disaster preparedness and response. For instance, every mission is required to have a Mission Disaster Response Plan in place, as they had when Mitch hit the region. These plans detail the defined roles of the mission, their interface with the host country emergency committee and Civil Defense, and mechanisms to carry such actions. On average, these plans were between 2 and 4 years old, and were not truly appreciated as good operational sourcebooks or guidelines.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Even locally-adapted one-time training or “passive manuals of operations” may not be enough to assure of preparedness. The role of the central disaster response office may be to support field offices with periodic planning and training so to enhance their preparedness.

- 3) **Specific Recommendation.** OFDA Guidance Cables could be streamlined and reduced in size to be more accessible and easily used. For instance, Guidance Cables are “thick documents” issued periodically that spell out OFDA’s mandate and list key points to consider when an emergency strikes. These cables often go unnoticed. In such regard, it made more sense to produce a Quick Reference Guide which could be distributed to everyone in the missions, accompanied by OFDA-assisted review and training.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Avoid producing “thick documents” that no one reads.

- 4) **Specific Recommendation.** Improve monitoring and tracking of disaster management trainees, and of training programs. Even though USAID and OFDA had trained significant numbers of people in disaster management at the municipal level, keeping track of their skills and location became a problem in an emergency. Although host countries presumably keep track of trainees, no data bases existed or were operational. Personnel turnover rates at the local/municipal level create a serious drain of trained personnel.
- Implied Recommendation for JICA.** Preparedness, and thus response capability, hinges on being able to mobilize resources of already-trained

personal. Such mobilization can be assisted by designing, systematizing, updating, and monitoring data bases of trained personnel on the ground.

- 5) **Specific Recommendation.** Constant reminders of host-country managerial constraints and tensions must be built into OFDA's activities. In both Honduras and Nicaragua, parallel structures emerged in an effort to fill operational gaps created by inefficiencies of and sometimes territorial tensions among the official institutions in charge of disaster management—local military, civilian, and private institutions. Even though OFDA and USAID missions were fairly well acquainted with host-country institutions at the time Mitch struck, the overwhelming shock of the disaster triggered confusion and rivalry among host-country institutions that hindered initial rapid responses.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Strengthening host-country institutions for disaster management is not a purely technical matter but requires good understanding of the host-country institutional matrix of strengths and weaknesses. This “intelligence capacity-building” should be part of the function of the local missions.

- 6) **Specific Recommendation.** Nurture and reevaluate having a strong PVO and NGO network of collaboration in disaster relief. USAID and OFDA already had a good working relationship with these types of organizations. On the ground, however, their extensive in-country experience and community outreach networks already in place became critical assets for rapid response. The downside of extensive and good working relationships, as well, should not be ignored, as the growth in the number of transactions and agents (e.g., subcontractors) involved in emergency situations requires significant adaptations in procurement structures and managerial structures, which may increase the workload for already stressed mission staff.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Nurture a strong PVO and NGO network of collaboration in disaster relief. Good response capability is increasingly driven by networked responses, which can be geographically based or functionally driven, depending on the types of organizations participating. Some organizations have more expertise in certain regions of the world than others; also, some specialize in handling shelter, food, or health matters. Take into consideration that building such network interfacing requires adaptations to procurement structures; knowledge of possible subcontractors; and in-house personnel who can rapidly assess the capabilities of subcontractors, often without extensive review and bidding processes.

- 7) **Specific Recommendation.** Develop streamlined procedures or templates for OFDA-funded PVO agreements (which may also include municipalities). For instance, within the first week of Mitch, the ability to maximize the operational capacity of PVOs depended on OFDA-Costa

Rica facilitating the signing of service agreements by providing a 2-page template that formalized relations.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. The ability to maximize the flexibility offered by collaborative agreements require not only degree of decentralized decision-making but also having simple procedures in place which allow the speedy and extensive roll – out of a collaborative of relief organizations.

- 8) **Specific Recommendation.** Mission Disaster Response Plans identify roles for the different U.S. government agencies involved in disaster relief, and the boundaries of their responsibilities, especially between military and civilian agencies. Good working relationships existed between the military and civilian agencies, although there was ample space for improvement. Warehouses holding stockpiles of goods used in disaster relief are housed on U.S. military bases and proved valuable during the Hurricane Mitch disaster. Besides stockpile readiness, other coordination aspects of preparedness seemed to be handled in a rather ad hoc manner.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Inter-agency coordination, especially among significantly different agencies, is fundamental at all stages of disaster relief.

- 9) **Specific Recommendation.** Be acquainted with the steps and procedures to deal with the obstacles imposed by special agreements—such as source/origin clauses to acquire some goods⁴²—or by difficult bureaucracies, which often reflect weak governmental structures. For instance, some OFDA grantees reported delays in disaster relief caused by a lack of adequate procedural understanding to secure source/origin clauses waived by USAID to import supplies from other than U.S. sources, or to have commodities released from customs.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Develop alternative strategies for legal and bureaucratic obstacles that are likely to arise in emergency situations. For example, as suggested before, simple procedures which allow co-operative partners and relief organizations to react to the situations more efficiently.

4.2 *Coordination and Communications Recommendations*

In the area of **Coordination and Communications**, the recommendations can be summarized in five points:

1. **Specific Recommendation.** To the greatest extent possible, missions employ personnel well acquainted with disaster relief, especially in highly

⁴² Often, donor organizations have to obey contractual clauses regarding where and from what kinds of vendors they have to obtain certain goods and services. These vendors can be nationals from the country of the donor agency, nationals from the host country, or from organizations elsewhere.

vulnerable countries. Even though USAID and OFDA have well-trained personnel on staff, in Nicaragua, for instance, new personnel were not acquainted with the established steps for dealing with emergencies.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Hire and train personnel who are acquainted with disaster management. Most of the personnel of embassies and JICA offices in host countries are not necessarily specialists, or have experience with particular functional areas such as disaster management, economic development, health or housing. This trend, however, is required to change, and such agencies need to use a much broader set of criteria to staff their offices. This diversity as well as specialization is a key aspect to rapid emergency responses. It is recommended using a broader set of criteria for staffing local offices.

2. **Specific Recommendation.** USAID and OFDA may improve their oversight/coordination mechanisms of the “chain of relief” from the warehouse to end-user (when applicable). Reaching end-users is not a standardized procedure since every disaster has its own geography and requires coping with distinct constraints, e.g., in the infrastructure. In the case of Hurricane Mitch, while some distribution networks were quite effective in allocating goods to where they were most needed, at other times reaching end-users was an extremely difficult task hindered by lack of coordination or by having one single overextended agent trying to cover too many functions.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Avoid monopolies on the “chain of relief.” Create flexible structures that use coordination to maximize their comparative advantages in certain regions, or their expertise in particular functional specializations such as food distribution, health, shelter provision, and engineering.

3. **Specific Recommendation.** Just as collaboration among PVOs, NGOs, and OFDA and other agencies was the overall rule of response to the emergency situation, coordination should work to minimize competition over funding and territory. For instance, the USAID mission in Nicaragua noticed this competition among PVOs.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Preparedness entails coordination well beyond having ready stockpiles or sound procurement practices. Invest time in coordination activities that acquaint agents with their respective roles, capabilities, and networking/interactive potential. Under non-emergency conditions, many NGOs and PVOs are connected or manage different kinds of networks that would tend to overlap with the networks required to deploy disaster relief. Try to assess the extent of such overlap and support their activity. It may save valuable time and resources.

4. **Specific Recommendation.** Inter-agency coordination can be significantly improved with the creation of permanent liaison positions

that maintain contact between agencies. For instance, as a result of Mitch, OFDA created a permanent liaison position with the Southern Command in Miami.⁴³

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Coordination activities require some permanent degree of institutionalization. Country and multilateral organizations, albeit recently, and also heavily influenced by Mitch's experience, are creating permanent liaison positions in charge of coordination for disaster relief.⁴⁴

5. **Specific Recommendation.** Integrate the use of new information technologies into preparedness, coordination, and communications. For instance, although Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies were available at the time Mitch struck Central America, they were not sufficiently integrated into day-to-day planning for satisfactory use.

Implied Recommendation for JICA. Investigate the potential of new technologies to improve preparedness in host countries, and improve compatibility of these technologies (and data bases) with those of disaster relief agencies. The SHARE Project currently under development at OFDA in collaboration with the UNOCHA, is a good example of such an effort.⁴⁵

V Inside OFDA

This section goes deeper into OFDA's functioning, and selectively highlights some of the factors that contribute to that organization's rapid response capabilities: (1) Logistics; (2) Procurement; (3) Technology; (4) Operational Readiness and Team Work; (5) Training (the Latin American region). Recognizably, these are not the only factors that contribute to OFDA's performance.

5.1 Logistics

OFDA has a Disaster Logistic Unit in Washington, D.C. The unit belongs to the Operational Support Division, which provides the necessary technical and logistical support to the Office. The unit is staffed by a core of 3 people who also receive support from other personnel at OFDA, depending on the volume of activities being handled at any particular moment. The core personnel of the unit also serve as liaison with other logistics support personnel at other government agencies and with subcontractors of various kinds. The unit has four major functions:

1. Maintaining and monitoring the levels and conditions of stockpiles in the system of warehouses kept by OFDA worldwide (Italy, Guam,

⁴³ Interview with Steven Caitlin. OFDA-Southern Command. Military Liaison. Feb.2001.

⁴⁴ Interview with Mariko Russell. IDB. February, 2001

⁴⁵ The SHARE project is described below in this report.

- Maryland/USA, Miami/USA, and one under construction at Soto Cano/Honduras);
2. All aspects of transport management;
 3. Maintaining good contact with, and knowledge about, both large and small subcontractors of logistical support;
 4. Coordination of logistical support and communications to the point of delivery in the host country (although not necessarily to the end-user).

When disaster strikes anywhere in the world, this unit is in charge of receiving the request for goods to be delivered from the mission offices or from assessment teams. The Logistics Unit then proceeds to call the appropriate warehouses, which in all cases are on military bases. Most of the time, the U.S. Military coordinates to deliver the goods. If the goods are to be acquired in the host country, the Logistics Unit also coordinates the acquisition and delivery. The Logistics Unit is in charge of delivering to the host country's entry point. From there onwards, other agents become responsible for delivery to the end-user. Delivery to the end-user is usually made by international or local NGOs, by other host-country official governmental entities, or by a designated official body created to manage the specific disaster.

The Logistics Unit does not handle donations from external agents, which are assigned to a separate unit at OFDA. In cases when the U.S. Military cannot meet the transportation needs, the unit relies on a network of subcontractors, both small and large, that are prepared to make the delivery. These subcontractors are usually well known to unit personnel from prior projects or have been previously screened/qualified by OFDA to do the job. For example, sometimes the goods can be bought cheaper in the host country, so the decision is to acquire them on-site, thus eliminating the need for more expensive air cargo operations. Delivery of blankets or food most commonly follows this pattern.

The ability of the unit to meet its requirements is the result of a combination of factors. On the one hand are special characteristics of unit personnel, along with a "layering" of accumulated experience in organizational readiness evolves and matures over the years.⁴⁶ Each unit member has more than 8 years of experience in logistics, including significant work experience with various organizations specializing in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. One recently hired unit member has 10 years of experience coordinating transportation for humanitarian assistance delivery, bringing to his logistics unit transport knowledge acquired in a decade of daily field experience in a work environment where disasters, logistical problems and time zones do not respect schedules.⁴⁷

Teamwork and team readiness are equally critical to the function and flexibility of the unit. Meeting logistical needs usually requires devising tailor-made responses to problems whose sources and solutions are rarely standardized. The veteran team's collective knowledge and experience can be invaluable, and maintaining a good working

⁴⁶ Interview with Terrence Goeldner and Todd Horne. Disaster Logistics Specialists. USAID, OFDA. 2001.

⁴⁷ Interview with Terrence Goeldner and Todd Horne. Disaster Logistics Specialists. USAID, OFDA. 2001.

relationship with USAID field offices complements the unit's internal capabilities. The unit's internal coherence also relies on revising and analyzing historical profiles of the various emergencies in which they have participated, and periodic "After Action Reviews." These reviews, mainly of large disasters, dissect the actions that were undertaken and how logistical support performed. The unit does not conduct any particular "drilling" or "simulations" for the purposes of "benchmarking."

On the other hand, several contributors to efficiency and flexibility of function relate to the more formal organizational attributes of the unit, especially on matters of decision-making autonomy, procurement, and coordination/collaboration.

Limited decision-making autonomy regarding certain logistical issues such as transportation does not mean that decisions are made apart from upper levels of administration at OFDA. However, in response to critical shortages of goods or services essential for disaster relief during the early stages of an emergency the unit can carry out rapid solicitations that need not be channeled through the regular mechanisms of outsourcing and subcontracting. This "exception mechanism" falls under OFDA's "Notwithstanding Authority" administrative statute.⁴⁸

The Unit can also make rapid decisions on whether or not to obtain some goods and services outside the scope of source/origin clauses for obtaining goods and services from USA subcontractors. The unit has several available channels to meet its functional needs. The loci of some decisions are at the unit level avoiding a long chain of command and decision-makers who may not have the appropriate information or expertise to make them.

Even though procurement functions do not formally reside with the unit, its close coordination with those in charge of overall procurement affairs is central to its performance. OFDA has its own procurement unit and works in close contact with the Logistics Unit.

OFDA relies heavily on the U.S. Air Force for transport capacity as well as source sub-contracting of transport capacity. In this case, procurement needs are executed through the U.S. Air Force Contracting Augmentation Program (AFCAP) under an inter-agency agreement. This agreement is not a formal contractual arrangement;⁴⁹ the Air Force essentially mediates (and organizes) procurement, and frequently also delivers the goods sought. Under AFCAP, the Air Force, if required, solicits bids for transportation services from private companies specialized in meeting procurement needs for large operations. OFDA's procurement relationship with the U.S. Air Force recognizably results in somewhat higher costs than through more open procurement clauses.

⁴⁸ "Notwithstanding Authority" is stated in Section 491 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. It says that "no statutory or regulatory requirements shall restrict BHR/OFDA's ability to respond to the needs of disaster victims in a timely fashion." Cited in BHR/OFDA Annual Report FY 1998, p.9.

⁴⁹ An inter-agency coordination agreement is one of the various procurement instruments available to OFDA.

Nonetheless, the relation is simple and very reliable. This relationship is currently under revision.⁵⁰

A final area of importance to unit function is its constant collaboration and coordination with multiple agents within the U.S. Government, the NGO/PVO sector, the U.S. Military, and even the private sector. In simple terms, the mission of the unit could not be accomplished if it did not maintain an active web of relations and contacts to satisfy multiple needs as they appear during each intervention. Logistic specialists in the unit noted that it is “impossible to have all the manpower [in-house]” and that such an extensive web is the only way to meet OFDA’s needs.⁵¹

As a final note on logistics, it is important to mention that the unit relies heavily on the initial “logistic” assessments provided by missions on the ground. This early report/request guides the size of the response that must be organized.

5.2 *Procurement*

Procurement, like logistics, cannot be considered in isolation from other important aspects of organizational flexibility within OFDA. It is an important function but by no means the key to effectiveness in short-term responsiveness. Procurement affairs, like all of USAID’s and OFDA’s responsibilities, administrative duties, and powers are grounded legally in the basic framework provided by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, and its subsequent amendments. Further, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) of the U.S. Federal Government regulates USAID’s procurement activity. More specifically, USAID procurement matters within FAR are outlined under a specific section, the USAID Acquisition Regulation (AIDAR).⁵²

FAR is the primary document of uniform policies and procedures for all executive agencies of the U.S. Government for acquisition of supplies and services with appropriate funds. Correspondingly, AIDAR outlines the same matters for USAID. Needless to say, those two bodies add to an extremely complex web of regulations, whose detail and extension are outside of the scope of this inquiry. During the two terms of President Clinton’s administration, it took a commission headed by Vice-President Al Gore several years simply to outline and map procurement structure.

USAID has working relationships with more than 3,500 American companies and over 300 U.S.-based private voluntary organizations. The agency also has relations with non-U.S. and international organizations.⁵³ Information about business and procurement opportunities, and regulations governing solicitations are widely available at a public website: www.info.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/forms. The information

⁵⁰ Interview with Terrence Goeldner and Todd Horne. Disaster Logistics Specialists. USAID, OFDA. 2001.

⁵¹ Interview with Terrence Goeldner and Todd Horne. Disaster Logistics Specialists. USAID, OFDA. 2001

⁵² USAID Acquisition Regulation (AIDAR). Structure of AIDAR to the Sub-Part Level 48 CRF Chapter 7 Subchapter A-General. July 10,2000; Major Functional Series 300: Acquisition and Agreement ADS 301 Responsibility for Procurement; Functional Series 100-Organization and Executive Management ADS 101-Agency Programs and Functions. 2/8/2001.All documents on file with the authors.

⁵³ www.usaid.gov/about/

on this site is in the public domain and updated almost daily on the site and in *Commerce Business Daily*. It is important to remember that the U.S. Government is probably one of the largest purchasers of goods and services in the world.

It is important to emphasize and discuss two issues related to OFDA's procurement instruments that bear upon OFDA's rapid response capabilities and flexibility: (1) assignment of procurement responsibility; and (2) the mix of procurement instruments available to the Office.

Assignment of Procurement Responsibility. Under the regulations mentioned above, USAID response to widely varied situations can include formation of Strategic Objective Teams with significant procurement decision-making authority. At OFDA, the RMTs and DARTs represent good examples of such teams. Within the boundaries of these teams, the officers can organize and assign procurement decision-making along three broad strategic lines that reflect distinct decision-making instances:

1. USAID Missions may assume direct responsibility for operations;
2. Host countries may be given the responsibility;
3. Other U.S. agencies, private firms, NGOs, PVOs, or educational institutions (or a combination of them) may be chosen as intermediaries.

The procurement regulatory structure outlines specific clauses, limitations, exceptions, and rules that apply to each of these instances, which are, in turn, largely a function of the kinds of goods and services being sought; the number and size of foreseeable transactions; the timeframe in which they are needed; compliance requirements and harmony with other regulatory structures outside AIDAR, such as employment and discrimination regulations; and other mitigating circumstances. The lengthy roster of conditions amounts to many thousands of pages of documentation, which are the result of many years of design and elaboration. They can also be accessed online at www.info.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/forms.

When USAID acts as the direct contractor (instance #1 in the list above), the FAR and AIDAR work to maximize USAID's control. When USAID acts as a financier (instances #2 and #3), the regulatory structure works to assure that the contracting agent has the attributes and competencies required to deliver the goods and services in the appropriate fashion. In instances #2 and #3, the regulatory structure lays out a "Contracting Assessment" process that leads to a "Certification" of the particular agent that will bear the responsibility for delivering the goods or services.

This "Contracting Assessment" process is not necessarily uniform: it varies in its competitive openness/scope of solicitation, depth, or rigor depending on the types of parties involved in the process (private, public, non-profit), and/or the timeframe in which the goods and services are required, among other factors. The plethora of factors that can shape this "contracting assessment" process, and all other contractual situations that may arise during the life and execution of the contract (conflicts, non-compliance, forms of payment), are outlined in AIDAR.

Not even the most perfect and well-oiled procurement structure can plan and prepare for the sudden, chaotic, stressful and unique conditions imposed by natural disasters and other emergencies. How, then, is it possible to combine the demand for rapid response and flexibility on the one hand, with those of efficiency and accountability on the other?

From interviews with personnel from the Regional Divisions (Asia and Latin America)⁵⁴ and other personnel at OFDA (logistics, planning) two factors appear as critical: (1) a shared basic understanding, held by all personnel alike, of the functional roles of each unit within OFDA; (2) sharing and constant circulation of knowledge about the performance of the Office in the distinct situations in which it becomes involved.

These are achieved by various means and have important implications for both maximizing and overcoming constraints related to the complex procurement regulatory demands. For instance, assignments to “stand-by” teams are periodically rotated in order to expose personnel to the real demands of emergencies. In that way, should the need arise to deal with specific problems, they are addressed within the moment or travel expediently through the chain of command and responsibility, including some procurement decision-making. RMTs and DARTs have built-in procurement knowledge and functions.

The permanent process of evaluation within the organization is also critical to the extent that it creates a strong sense of trust and delegation (decentralized decision-making) within the hierarchy of OFDA. In simple terms, the personnel confronting the emergency on the ground can obviously within some limits execute some procurement decisions that are critical to the performance of the overall intervention.

The Mix of Procurement Instruments. OFDA relies heavily on collaborations with its implementing partners to deliver assistance. For example, on average, sixty percent of OFDA’s humanitarian assistance is provided through grants to PVOs and NGOs⁵⁵ To make this possible, procurement instruments can take three forms: (1) contracts; (2) grants; and (3) cooperative agreements.

Contracts are used when the principal purpose is the acquisition by purchase, lease, or barter of property or services for direct benefit or use of USAID (or any other Federal Government entity.)⁵⁶

Grants are used when the purpose of the relationship is the transfer of money, property, services, or anything of value to the recipient in order to accomplish a public purpose of support or simulation authorized by federal statute. Under a grant, the recipient is to have substantial freedom to pursue its stated program, and substantial

⁵⁴ Interviews with Eileen Simoes , OFDA. LAC Deputy Regional Coordinator; Rob Thayer. OFDA. Asia Desk Officer. Feb.2001.

⁵⁵ OFDA Guidelines for Grant Proposals and Reporting, (Oct.1998). p.3.

⁵⁶ Major Functional Series 300: Acquisition and Agreement ADS 301 Responsibility for Procurement. P.78

involvement is not anticipated between USAID and the recipient during the performance of the proposed activity.⁵⁷

Cooperative agreements are used when the principal purpose of the relationship is the transfer of money, property, services or anything of value to the recipient in order to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by federal statute, and substantial involvement is anticipated between USAID and the recipient during the performance of the proposed activity.⁵⁸

Under each of these instruments there may be other specific subcategories of arrangements. For example, under cooperative agreements, “inter-agency agreements” can take four different forms: (1) Participatory Agency Service Agreements (PASA); (2) Resource Services Agreement (RSA); (3) Economic Act Order; (4) Other Inter-Agency Agreements.⁵⁹ As was stated in the previous section on logistics, without the availability of this mix of instruments it would be very difficult to carry on the functions of the unit.

As a final comment, at OFDA, maximizing opportunities offered by the procurement regulatory structure, as well as minimizing its constraining influence, requires a clear classification of disasters (and their geography), and the overall programmatic lines of the Office. The type of response is determined by the kind of disaster being addressed, and thus the procurement strategy employed needs to correspond to the need. In overall programmatic terms, procurement and the mix of instruments tend to vary in order to meet, for instance, short- or longer-term needs in preparedness, mitigation, or development-associated strategies.

5.3 *Technology*

Technological resources of various kinds play a critical role at practically all stages of disaster management and relief efforts.⁶⁰ Most recently, the digital revolution and new information technologies have facilitated the integration of new tools such as geographic information systems (GIS) to such efforts.⁶¹ Further, different agencies from the U.S. Government and other entities have realized the importance of producing coordinated approaches to the development and deployment of these new tools for improvement in the areas of preparedness and rapid response. This coordination is intended to maximize the potential of overlapping technologies that are used, for example, in regular natural-resource management and weather forecasting, but which could also play a key role in disaster management. The disaster management and development

⁵⁷Ibid. P.78

⁵⁸Ibid. P.78

⁵⁹ Ibid. P.115

⁶⁰ As discussed in the original proposal, a comprehensive discussion of technologies in disaster management, such as complex early warning systems and weather tracking and monitoring systems was not a main objective of the research. However, it is important to recognize their importance in some of OFDA's activities.

⁶¹ This past January 17, 2001, USAID organized a conference on the use of new information technologies in development, including disaster management: New Technologies for Disaster & Development Communication Conference.

community, in addition to the call for exploiting the potential of new information technologies, has also issued a warning not to neglect the use and deployment of cheap, fairly “low tech” systems which suit well the needs of developing regions, as in the management of river basins that are prone to flooding.

At OFDA, use of new technological resources seem concentrated in three areas: **(1) network building; (2) information dissemination; and (3) preparedness.** With respect to network building, USAID and OFDA have placed significant emphasis on using the INTERNET (and the WWW) to strengthen ties among the multiple agents involved in disaster relief. USAID and OFDA serve as co-sponsors of initiatives such as “Sphere” and VITA, and participate in the organization of other portals maintained by organizations such as the UN, OAS and PAHO.⁶² Broad significance here lies in the new electronic medium as a new space for collaboration. It is important to note that JICA appears so far to be largely absent from this new form of networking.

In terms of information dissemination, USAID and OFDA have placed online a vast amount of documentation about their activities, programs, procurement needs, and evaluation, as well as studies and conceptual papers about disaster management, among other relevant information. Their portal also serves as a link to other equally useful portals of collaborating partners.

Finally, OFDA is making an effort to integrate the use of new information technologies through projects aimed at reducing the vulnerability of countries and regions to various kinds of natural disasters, and improving appropriate response preparedness. These efforts are being developed in collaboration with different agents ranging from the scientific communities in host countries, other U.S. Government agencies, and NGOs, to multilateral organizations like the United Nations and World Bank.

Two noteworthy examples of these projects are subcomponents of USAID/OFDA’s Central American Mitigation Initiative (CAMI), and the SHARE Project. Within the scope of CAMI, OFDA is supporting, together with the US Geological Survey (USGS) a full-time GIS and remote-sensing facility and specialist in Honduras to develop information systems for disaster mitigation and planning, and to strengthen the operational linkages between national civil defense and municipalities. Also under CAMI, OFDA in collaboration with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is supporting a regional, aerial flash flood guidance and warning system to deliver guidance to local and regional agencies via national meteorological services.⁶³ The SHARE project constitutes a joint effort by an informal technical team comprised of information focal points from United Nations, the World Bank and donor agencies with disaster management and humanitarian assistance mandates. SHARE is a systematic approach to organizing, validating and mapping critical information under a

⁶² See: www.oas.org/nhp; www.paho.org/Spanish/disaster.htm; www.vita.org; www.reliefweb.int; www.sphereproject.org.

⁶³ Collaboration with OAS. Natural Hazards Project. At www.oas.org. Also USAID/OFDA’s Central American Mitigation Initiative (CAMI). OFDA Internal Document. N.d.

common frame of reference to facilitate assessment, coordination, and priority setting in the deployment of resources.⁶⁴

5.4 *Operational Readiness and Teamwork*

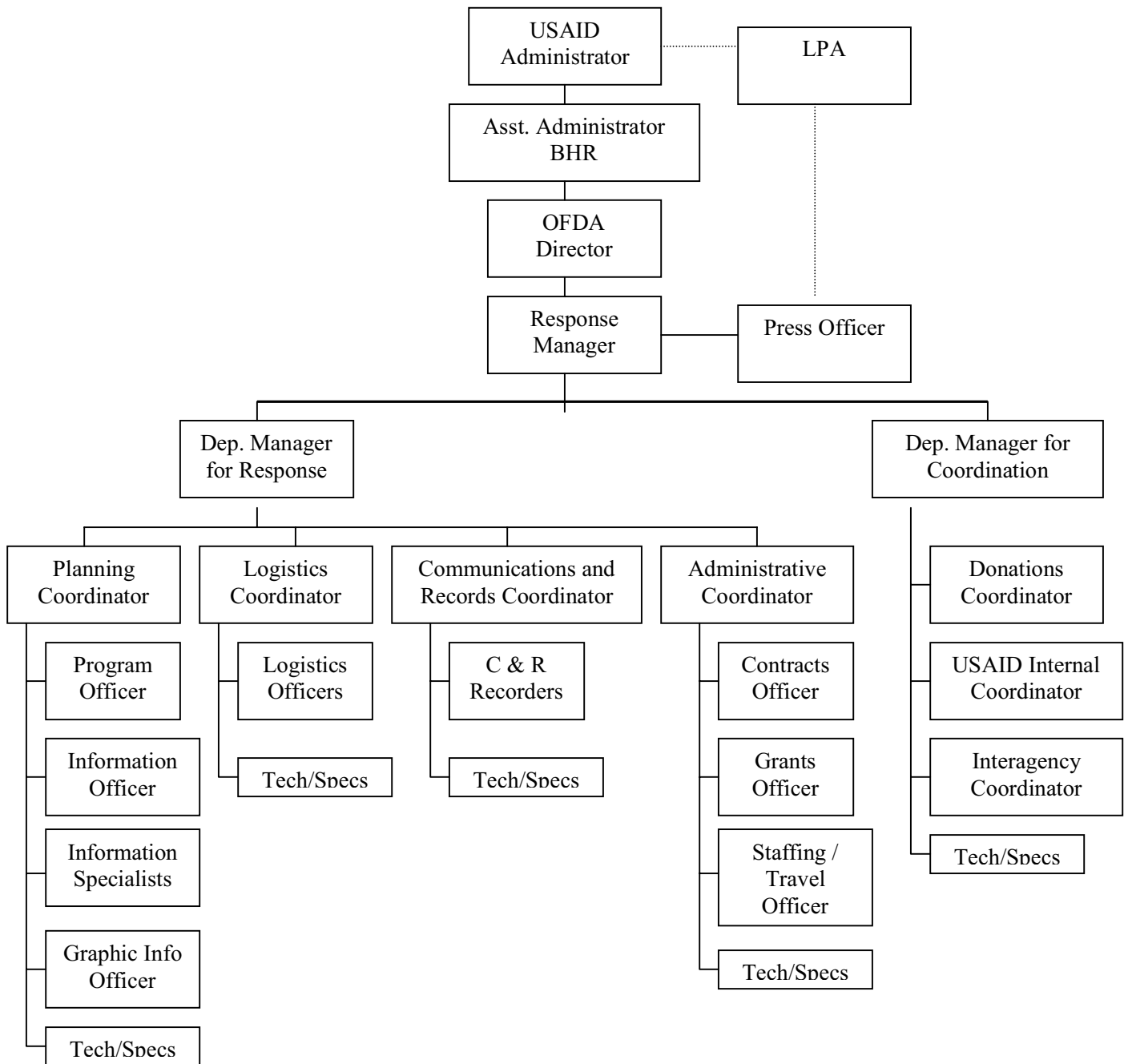
OFDA, in response to its experiences with Hurricane Mitch and other recent complex emergencies, has created multi-task, multi-functional, integrated teams suited to exercise management control of every critical aspect of an emergency. Two separate teams are organized—one to coordinate operations in Washington, D.C., and a counterpart to manage operations in the field. Functionally, these teams are similar in composition. The team in place and on “standby” in Washington D.C., is called the Response Management Team (RMT). The second team sent to the field is the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)/ GO Team.⁶⁵ OFDA’s director organizes and activates RMTs, and the DARTs are organized jointly with the RMT and the Regional Directors/Teams. The RMT and DART are activated when the scope, complexity, or volume of the response exceeds the capabilities of the Regional Team.⁶⁶ The basic structure of these teams can be seen in the following charts.

⁶⁴ Geographic Information Support Team, (2000). SHARE: Structured Humanitarian Assistance Reporting. Summary Description. Concept Paper. April, 2000.

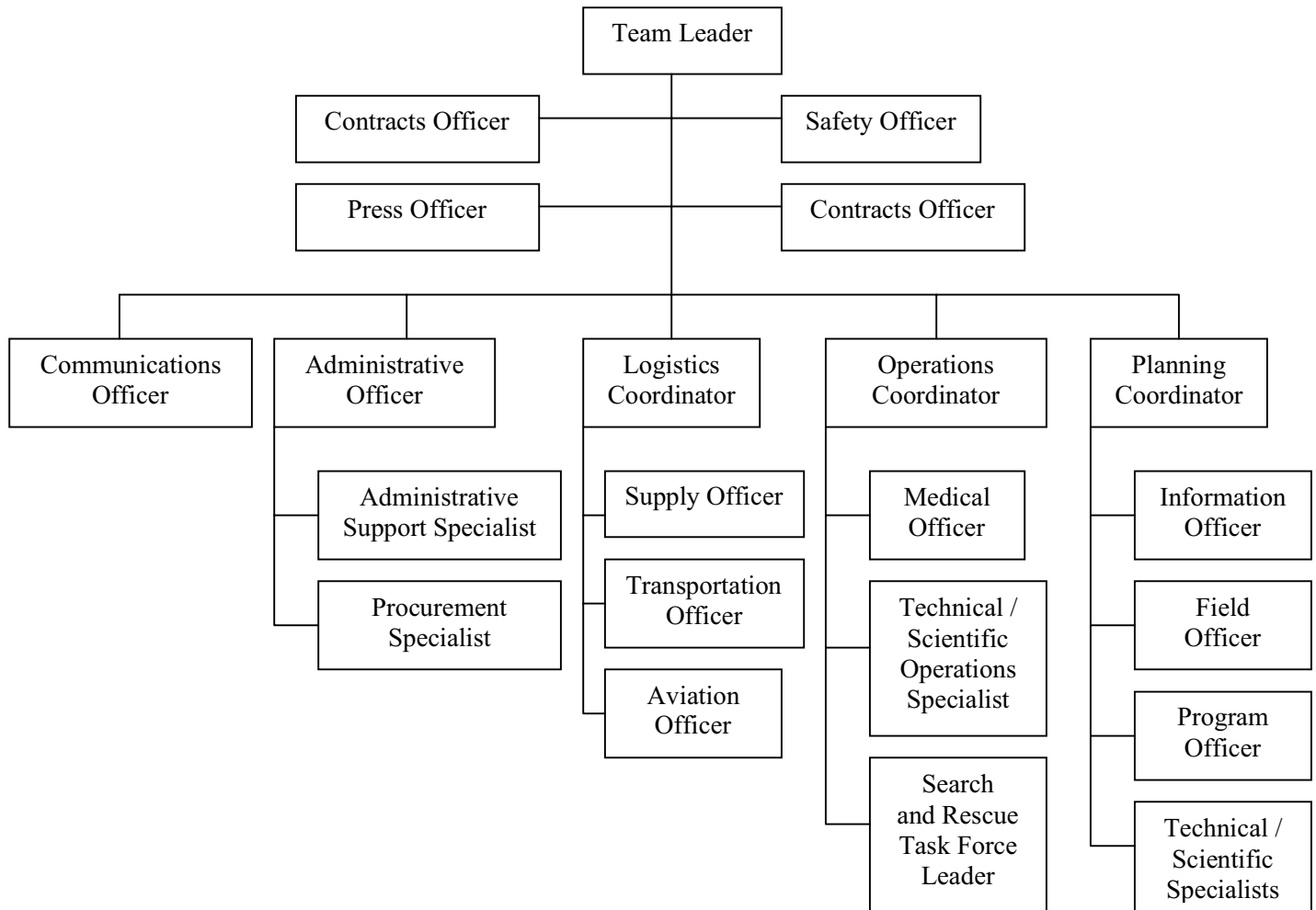
⁶⁵ Ground Operations (GO) Teams are part of the DART. GO are 5 person advance teams, comprised of USAID Disaster Response Specialists and Miami Dade Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) officers, usually deployed within 24-36 hours following a disaster. GO Teams are designed for rapid deployment of technical personnel together with packaged modules of relief commodities consisting of medical supplies, hygiene kits, plastic sheeting, five-gallon water jugs and wool blankets. The “GO” Kits are also stocked with necessary communication equipment. All these relief supplies are propositioned at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Miami, FL

⁶⁶ OFDA.(1999). Washington Response Management Team Policy. Internal Document. Dec.1999.

Response Team Organizational Chart



***DART
Organizational Chart***



The effectiveness of these teams relies on four important features. First, they incorporate the basic functions from the main operational units at OFDA, such as planning, logistics, and contract management. In that way, they are well prepared to tackle in a coordinated fashion all the multiple tasks of handling an emergency. Second, they hold significant operational authority and autonomy. In activating RMT and DART, OFDA's Director delegates authority to them. From the moment of activation, the Director will only intervene in case of significant conflicts and disagreement between the RMT and the DART over strategy. Third, these teams expand and contract in size and activity depending on the complexity of the operational requirements. For example, some emergencies may or may not require technical experts, or may not demand complex logistical intervention. Finally, personnel in these teams are rotated periodically to avoid fatigue and to allow experience to disseminate through the entire organization.

The teams are formed from a current data base of qualifications with input from employees and OFDA training staff. It is every employee's responsibility to notify the OFDA Operations Center Manager of changes to his or her availability and training completion as it occurs. Personnel assignments to an OFDA Washington RMT will not exceed a maximum of 21 days and no more than 6 weeks for a long-term DART. Currently, two RMT's at OFDA are on "standby" and ready to respond to any emergency.

It is worth noticing that OFDA, to assure the operational effectiveness of these teams, has set out their functions and duties in a detailed operational document. In this document, the activities for each member of the teams are broken down into three moments: (1) pre-activation activities; (2) following activation activities; (3) close-up activities.⁶⁷ Also, USAID/OFDA issues a "Field Operations Guide for Assessment and Response" that provides detailed information in practically all aspects of field operations.⁶⁸ This guide is produced in a "pocket-size" format, in weather resistant material, with extremely condensed information that may come handy for critical decision-making in the field.

5.5 *Training (and the Latin American Region)*

A substantial part of OFDA's performance in disaster management in the Latin American Region has been attributed to its long track record of providing training in disaster management. OFDA's training activities in the region began in 1989 with the Disaster Management Training Program (DPM).⁶⁹ DPM has evolved throughout the years in terms of its training methods and the content of courses.⁷⁰ Content courses have been taught in: (1) Disasters Program Management; (2) Shelters and Shelter Management; (3) Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis; (3) Introduction to Disaster Management; (4) Effective Presentations and Briefings. Teaching methods have become highly interactive. Over the decade, some 17,000 people have enrolled in the DPM courses. OFDA's training approach seeks the direct involvement of stakeholders in disaster relief, especially of entities and populations at the local level, including national and local level civil defense agencies, firefighters, national forest and park service agencies, NGO's, municipalities, and local Red Cross Chapters, among others.

DPM has had both direct and indirect benefits for the region. Directly, many government officials in the region attribute to DPM-related activities the development of their disaster management infrastructure and response capabilities. Indirectly, among the many "spill-over" effects of DPM are: (1) development of local and national disaster management agencies; (2) incorporation of disaster-coping strategies within Ministry of education guidelines; (3) development of disaster management programs and courses at various regional universities and in various disciplines such as engineering, public policy, medicine; (4) promotion of public awareness about natural disasters; (5) formation of

⁶⁷ OFDA.(1999). Washington Response Management Team Policy. Internal Document. Dec.1999.

⁶⁸ USAID. Field Operations Guide for Disaster Assessment and Response.

⁶⁹ OFDA. (ND). Managing Risk, Managing Disaster Response: Success in Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington, DC.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Also see WWW.OFDALAC.org/English/method.

networks concerned with natural disaster management; and (6) incorporation of natural disaster awareness in planning and municipal management.

Most recently, OFDA's has enriched its internal and external training activities by broadening the scope of problems that should be addressed at the various stages of disaster management and in different kinds of emergencies.⁷¹ New topics such as gender and ethnic/racial awareness, environmental, and political concerns have been systematically incorporated into curriculums and operational procedures. Awareness and systematic incorporation of these topics responds to a changing approach to disaster management that is trying to factor into strategies and interventions important behavioral interrelationships that significantly affect some aspects of disaster management, e.g., the delivery of resources to especially vulnerable populations like children, war refugees, or displaced agricultural communities. The general lesson to draw is that OFDA's operational capabilities are well complemented by a long history of capacity building in the region that enhances rapid response and preparedness.

VI Recommendations

This report has drawn from a broad range of sources, confirming the complexity of disaster management as an area of expertise. This report has only scratched the surface of an area that is expanding and developing ramifications and connections with other equally broader fields such as development economics, anthropology, urban planning, systems operations, public policy, new information technologies, and even financial capital markets development. The days of disaster management as a straight "hard-hat" or simple goodwill duty are gone, as attested by the large amount of resources devoted to it, and the large number of top-quality professionals specializing in the matter.

In this last section, recommendations are grouped into three major categories: (1) recommendations proceeding from comparisons of OFDA's and JICA's organizational characteristics; (2) recommendations emerging from OFDA's learning experience after Hurricane Mitch, with applicability to JICA; and (3) recommendations for JICA proceeding from an analysis of selective aspects of OFDA's internal functioning.

6.1 General Limitations and Major Strategic Considerations

These recommendations must be considered with three important limitations of this research in mind, which were mentioned in Section 2.2. of this report and are worthwhile repeating:

- (1) The availability and abundance of institutional material on OFDA's internal and external activities and performance significantly outpaces JICA's, especially relating to issues of disaster relief efforts in Latin America and other important matters such as procurement.

⁷¹ Interview with Marion Pratt. Social Science Advisor. OFDA. Feb.2001.

- (2) Proximity to OFDA's headquarters in Washington, D.C. favored a much richer analysis of that organization relative to JICA's.
- (3) The resources allocated for this research did not allow for any field research outside Washington, D.C.

OFDA's overall performance cannot be attributed to isolated characteristics, logistics, procurement, training, etc. OFDA's performance as a "learning organization" cannot be simply copied, or even appreciated as a group of "best practices," because it is the product of constant evaluation of practices and of a general organizational environment that upholds the perspective of constant learning. Thus, it would be a mistake to recommend that JICA copy uncritically certain features expecting that their application alone will bring swift, substantive changes. We venture to suggest, beyond the scope of this report that in the future JICA may address critical problems in four strategic areas:

- (1) **Connectedness.** JICA, in spite of being one of the largest contributors of assistance, seems distant from the broader disaster relief policy world and community.
- (2) **Applied Research.** A trend in disaster relief is to investigate, connect, and integrate relief efforts toward the broader development agenda for of countries receiving aid, and not just on matters of infrastructure or technological development but also on issues socio-economic and environmental vulnerability.
- (3) **Decentralized Decision-Making.** Organizational inflexibility and centralized decision making seems to be hampering JICA's responsive capabilities.
- (4) **Networked Responses.** Sufficient connectedness with the overall disaster relief community is not established and various types of networks of subcontractors, such NGO's, PVO's, etc are not built, yet.

6.2 *Recommendations from Comparing OFDA and JICA*

As mentioned in Section 3.8 of this report, two areas of contrast between OFDA and JICA can be highlighted to study and understand their capabilities to respond to natural disasters: (1) higher degree of decentralized decision-making; (2) greater use of networks. Each of these areas of contrast leads to possible recommendations and actions.

1) *Decentralized Decision-Making.* Assessing JICA's decision-making capabilities and constraints on deploying resources in order to make decisions related to

operational aspects of disaster relief a more decentralized process. This is by no means a simple task or process, since it may entail transformations and political changes that take a substantial amount of time and political will to negotiate and to implement. The main idea is not to suggest that overall change in the chain of authority is necessary to improve JICA's rapid response capability or flexibility. Important piecemeal measures may be carried out to benefit JICA's flexibility, like giving some of its executive officers greater operational authority, as is done at OFDA. This authority may be given only provisionally during emergencies. Other avenues of facilitating decentralized decision-making might be created through better training of JICA personnel on the various rubrics of disaster management, such as logistics or procurement, or by improving their knowledge of needs generated by specific kinds of disasters and emergencies, or regions. JICA's rotation of their personnel, paired with a centralized procurement structure that tends to concentrate experience in one or a few subcontracting agents does not encourage thorough acquisition and accumulation of experience. Experience is lost with personnel changes and new performance issues might never be raised or assessed.

2) *Network Building and Greater Use of Networks.* The second area of contrast between OFDA and JICA is in the use of networked responses in the various aspects or stages of disaster relief. OFDA, relative to JICA, apparently relies upon a broader range of agents to meet their overall mandate. JICA is already addressing some of these issues, but there is room for improvement at various levels and with many kinds of instruments. Here are some suggestions:

- JICA can increase and institutionalize its presence within the various kinds of networks applied to problems of disaster relief and management;
- JICA can create more permanent liaison activities with organizations in the region involved in disaster management;
- JICA can participate as co-sponsor in some of the collaborative efforts (and virtual networks) to improve disaster management in the region;
- JICA may create various data bases with critical information (functional/technical expertise, regional experience) about NGOs and other kinds of organizations involved in disaster management;
- JICA can make its procurement procedures more flexible to incorporate other agents into their operations, as in logistic management.

6.3 *Recommendations from Mitch Applicable to JICA*

As discussed in Section IV of this report, the Office of Program, Policy, and Management of BHR (USAID), carried a fairly comprehensive assessment of its role in humanitarian assistance in Central America and produced a set of recommendations to improve future actions, especially in two areas: (1) **Preparedness**; and (2) **Coordination and Communication Issues**. These recommendations were largely defined by the specific context created by Hurricane Mitch, and they were mainly concerned with improving the response capabilities of U.S. Government agencies; counterparts in host countries; and of the network of PVOs and NGOs that participate with USAID in relief efforts. Nevertheless, the recommendations provide a sound framework for other agencies, such as JICA, to improve their response capabilities in such disasters. Below

they are further synthesized, and whenever possible, they are translated into concrete activities that JICA might engage in.

1) *Preparedness*

- Maintain updated and user-friendly documentation about preparedness and rapid response capabilities and resources in country missions (or embassies).
- Develop and monitor data bases on trainees in disaster management that are easily accessible at an emergency situation.
- Engage in “intelligence capacity-building” for country missions to have a solid understanding of the host country’s constraints and capabilities to handle an emergency situation.
- Nurture and reevaluate having a strong PVO and NGO network of collaboration for disaster relief.
- Develop streamlined procedures or template forms to expedite contractual or collaborative agreements for different aspects of disaster relief, such as logistics, and distribution of goods and shelter.
- Have a clear map of inter-agency agreements and responsibilities in disaster relief.
- Where possible, maximize instances of decentralized decision-making.

2) *Coordination and Communications*

- To the extent possible, staff country missions (or train some personnel) on the key aspects of disaster management, especially in highly vulnerable countries.
- Dissolve or ease monopolies over the “chain of relief”—the links from the warehouse to the end-user—by creating flexible organizational structures that use coordination to maximize the expertise of multiple agents.
- Institutionalize, where appropriate, permanent liaison posts (inter-agency coordination) with key agencies involved in disaster, as, for instance, OFDA has with the U.S. Military.
- Integrate the use of new information technologies into preparedness in host countries, and improve their compatibility with those of the assistance community.

6.4 Recommendations for JICA from Selective Aspects of OFDA’s Internal Functioning

These recommendations unfold from the analysis of selective features of OFDA’s internal functioning/activities and organizational structure.

1) Logistics

- To the extent possible, maximize opportunities for decentralized decision-making in logistical support, especially in the selection and use of vendors of goods and services, both in the sending and receiving countries.

- Enhance coordination between logistics and procurement units at all stages of disaster relief operations.
- Put in place initial “logistic assessment” methodologies (to be used by the country missions) that can orient the size and depth of the activation and mobilization effort.
- Develop interagency coordination agreements to support logistic efforts.

2) Procurement

- Decentralize some procurement authority and responsibility to operational units at the various theaters of coordination—mission offices or operational teams on the field.
- Open the procurement process, and publicly post and disseminate information on how it works.
- Create procurement opportunities that maximize the expertise and flexibility of the new types of agents, such as NGOs and PVOs involved in disaster management.
- Employ a mix of procurement mechanisms or instruments with distinct degrees of flexibility, timeframes, and compromise (accountability).

3) Technology

- Integrate the use of new information technologies in the areas of network building, information dissemination, and preparedness.
- Strengthen JICA’s presence in the virtual networks about disaster relief that have formed in recent years, such as InterActive and ReliefWeb.
- Revise and place relevant documentation/information on disaster relief online at JICA’s web page.
- Develop projects that improve preparedness by linking country-host development of technological capabilities to JICA’s strategic efforts in disaster management.

4) Operational Readiness and Teamwork

- Assess the feasibility of creating multi-functional, multi-task response teams that reduce activation time and management delays during emergencies.
- Give these teams clear lines of autonomy regarding some operational decision-making at mission offices and in the field.
- Disseminate information and knowledge horizontally within JICA in order to acquaint personnel with the various tasks of emergency management.

5) Training

- Diversifying training programs at both the JICA headquarter and local offices. For example, consider training programs at JICA offices together with USAID or other bilateral agencies active in a country.
- Develop a systematic outreach, training, and education campaign in the region with the objective of improving JICA's connection to the region. This relation can be done directly by JICA or in collaboration with multiple agents.
- Connect training activities to evaluation of JICA's activities in the region. Evaluations can provide useful learning experiences about disaster management.
- Incorporate into JICA's activities the broader set of issues, like gender and racial/ethnic awareness, and civil society matters, which are proving to have a great impact on the performance of disaster relief.
- Develop information tools and marketing literature to convey JICA commitments and activities in the region. What little literature is available is difficult to read, unavailable in Spanish, and often difficult to comprehend. The size of JICA's commitments and role in the region warrants a more thorough revision of its communication tools.

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Acknowledgements
List of Acronyms

I Introduction

II Research Protocol

- 2.1 Research Protocol and Sources of Information
- 2.2 Limitations of the Research

III OFDA and JICA Compared

- 3.1 Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance 's (OFDA) Organizational Structure
- 3.2 OFDA's Mandate
- 3.3 Networks: The Core of OFDA's Resources
- 3.4 When Disaster Strikes
- 3.5 Authority
- 3.6 USAID's Organizational Values
- 3.7 International Disaster Relief System of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA
- 3.8 When Disaster Strikes
- 3.9 Network Response
- 3.10 Apparent Contrast Between OFDA and JICA Relevant to Rapid Response

IV Hurricane Mitch: An Eye Opener

- 4.1 Preparedness Recommendations
- 4.2 Coordination and Communications Recommendations

V Inside OFDA

- 5.1 Logistics
- 5.2 Procurement
- 5.3 Technology
- 5.4 Operational Readiness and Teamwork
- 5.5 Training (and the Latin American Region)

VI Recommendations

- 6.1 General Limitations and Major Strategic Considerations
- 6.2 Recommendations Developed by Comparing OFDA and JICA
- 6.3 Recommendations Applicable to JICA, Derived from Hurricane Mitch Studies
- 6.4 Recommendations for JICA from Selective Aspects of OFDA's Internal Functioning

VII Report Sources

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List of Acronyms

ACF - Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger)
AF CAP – U.S. Air Force Augmentation Contracting Program
AIDAR - USAID Acquisition Regulation
BHR - Bureau for Humanitarian Response (USAID)
CAMI - Central American Mitigation Initiative
CARE – Cooperation for American Relief Everywhere
CDC – Center for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
CDMP – Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project –OAS
CRS - Catholic Relief Services
DART - Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART)
DAD - Disaster Assistance Division, JICA
DOD - U.S. Department of Defense
DPM - Disaster Management Training Program –OFDA-LAC
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization (U.N.)
FAR - Federal Acquisition Regulation
FFP - Office of Food for Peace (USAID/BHR)
GIS – Geographic Information System
HACD - Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Division--JICA
ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross
IDA - International Disaster Assistance
IDB – Inter-American Development Bank – BID – Banco InterAmericano de Desarrollo
IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IO – International Organization
IOM - International Organization for Migration (U.N.)
JDR - Japan Disaster Relief
JICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency

JOVC - Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers —JICA
MOFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)
NITTSU – Nippon Express.
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OAS – Organization of American States – OEA Organización de Estados Americanos
OFDA - Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/BHR)
OTI - Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/BHR)
PAHO - Pan American Health Organization (WHO) – OPS Organización Panamericana de la Salud
PRM – Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (State)
PVO – Private Voluntary Organization
RMT – Response Management Team (USAID/OFDA)
SAR - Search and Rescue
State - U.S. Department of State
SC/US - Save the Children/United States
SHARE – Structured Humanitarian Assistance Reporting
UN – United Nations
UNHCR - U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF - U.N. Children’s Fund [use full title?]
UNOCHA or **OCHA** - U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID - U.S. Agency for International Development
USCG - U.S. Coast Guard
USDA - U.S. Department of Agriculture
USG - United States Government
USGS - U.S. Geological Survey
VITA – Volunteers in Technical Assistance
WHO – World Health Organization
WVUS - World Vision, Incorporated/U.S.